



SPORTING SOCIETY



EDITED BY

FOX RUSSELL





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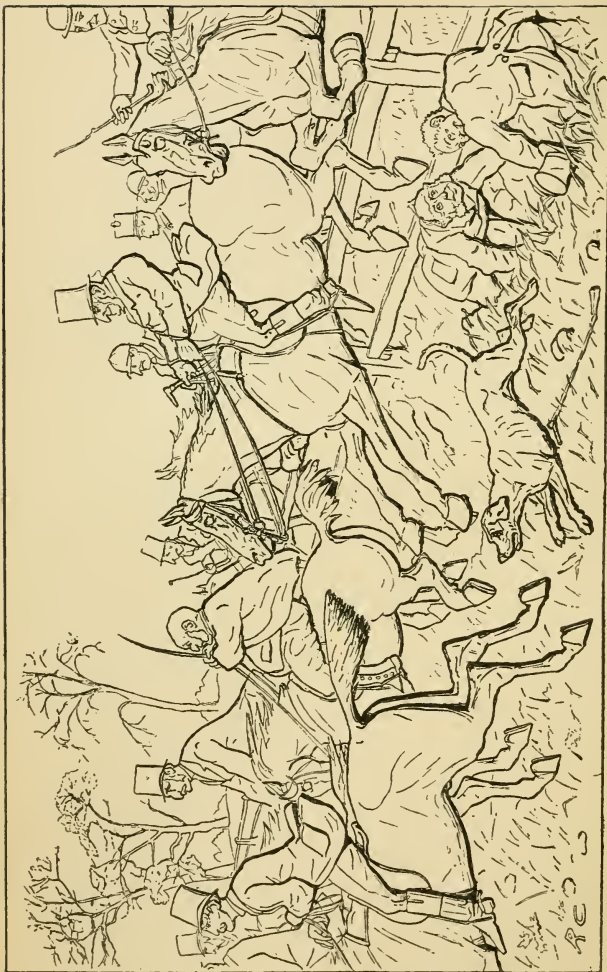
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SPORTING OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT DAY

“O TEMPORA! O MORES!” how our grandsires would stare if they could only see how differently sporting in all its branches is carried on now-a-days; it would make their pigtails stand on end, and the brass buttons fly off their blue coats in very fright.

There are few of the Squire Western school now left; but occasionally you may still come across some jovial old sportsman of eighty years or more, who, though his form is shrunk, and his snow-white head proclaims that many winters have passed over it, yet carries a pair of eyes as bright and keen as of yore, eyes that glisten again when he launches forth on his favourite hobby.

I know several gentlemen nearer eighty than seventy who still shoot, and keep a fine kennel of dogs. One of these gentlemen only last year took a moor in Scotland for five years. May he live to enjoy it and renew his lease.

I could name many close on, ay, over fourscore,

who ride well yet to hounds; and though they may not be such bruisers as they once were across country, yet are difficult to choke off.

It is just forty-one years [this was written twenty years ago] since I had my first mount to hounds. There is no *non mi ricordo* with me. I can recollect the day as well as yesterday, the pinks, the beaver-hats of curious shape, the short-tailed horses, are too vividly impressed on my memory ever to be effaced. Men went out in those days for hunting, and not merely for a gallop. Time changes all things, and I suppose we must change with the times; but are these changes for the better? Well, I will not give an opinion, but leave others to decide.

The hounds of those days were not nearly so fast as those of the present; and I am inclined to think that our hounds are now bred too fine and speedy—for some countries they certainly are—and often flash over and lose a scent which ought not to be lost.

Hunting, in the days I speak of, could be enjoyed by men of very moderate means, for it was not necessary to have two or three horses out. In some countries, especially woodland ones, one horse may still do; but, as a rule, hounds are now so fast, and horses so lightly bred to what they

were, that no hunter, however good he may be, can live with them from find to finish. If you wish to see a run out, you must have your first and second horsemen riding to points. These men must not only be light-weights, but steady, know the country, save their animals, and be there when wanted.

You seldom, at least where I hunted, saw men driving up to the meet in their well-appointed broughams, mail phaetons, or what-not. A long distance was done, in my early days, on a cover hack; and one hunter did where three are now required.

In the present day you see men stepping from their close carriages with the morning papers in their hands, beautifully got up—a choice regalia between their lips, with holland overalls to keep their spotless buckskins from speck of dirt or cigar ashes. Very different from the hardy men you encountered years gone by, alas! never to return again—cantering along on a corky tit, with *leather* overalls. Now you have all sorts of devices—waterproof aprons *before* and *behind*—in my idea it only wants some enterprising man to bring out a hunting-crop with an umbrella, something similar to the ladies' driving-whips, whip and parasol in one, to complete the picture. Fancy men hunting

with *waterproof aprons*—they should go out for *nurses* !

Perhaps, as years creep on, one is wont to look back on his youthful days and fondly imagine nothing is done so well now as then. Understand, I do not say hunting and shooting are not as good as they were. I do both still, and enjoy them as much as ever ; but there is not so much *sport* in them, to my mind, as formerly—men are not the *hardy*, genuine sportsmen they were.

Horses are much dearer now than twenty, thirty, forty years back—provender also. Where £1 would go thirty years ago, you require now nearly £1, 10s. ; this alone prevents many men from following their favourite pursuits.

The time is not far distant when hunting will be given up in England ; railways, the price of land, and the high market prices which must necessarily come with an increase of population, are doing their work slowly but surely. The present generation are not likely to witness it : so much the better, for it would break the hearts of some to see the noble pastime of hunting on its “last legs.” Waste land, too, is being rapidly enclosed, and what are now wilds, fifty or sixty years hence may be flourishing districts.

How many country villages are now huge towns !

I remember, years ago, when I used to meet the Queen's hounds, before the South-Western line was made, there was only one old wayside inn at Woking, which was much resorted to by "the fancy," for it was a noted spot for pugilists. Many and many a prize-fight have I seen there. Now Woking is a little town—I mean the new town, not the old town some four miles distant; and the spots where I used to knock over the snipe and plover are now built on and enclosed. And so it will go on to the end of all time; bricks and mortar, iron and compo, will rise up, large and small buildings, all over the face of the country, and those whose hearts are still bent on sport will have to go farther afield for it.

But this is already done. France, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, Bohemia, Bavaria, and other countries, have their English sportsmen. Railways have made nearly all places within reach of those with means. Scotch moors that you could rent thirty years ago for £50 a year, are now £500; the rivers the same; and grouse that are killed one day in Scotland are eaten the next in all parts of the United Kingdom.

Some men meet the hounds now thirty and forty miles away from home. They breakfast comfortably at home, then step into the train, and are whirled away with their horses and grooms; have

a gallop, come home, or perhaps go out to a grand luncheon; lounge down to their club, or do a few calls, then dine, and go to one of the theatres to see the last new thing; finish up with a supper or a ball, or perhaps both.

Old Squire Broadfurrow has ridden his stout, easy-going hack to cover, has had a clinking day, and a fox run into, as the crow flies, about eight-and-twenty miles from his home. The old man, nothing daunted, jogs quietly along and pulls up at the first country inn, orders a chop for himself and a bucket of gruel for his horse, gets home in good time to entertain three or four choice souls at dinner, ride the run over again, and talk of some shooting they are going to have on the morrow. Reader, which is the pleasanter style of the two? which the most healthy? Railways and hunting I cannot reconcile with my ideas of sport; there is a sort of cockneyism about it that I do not like; it seems to me poor "form."

Men change, too, in their ideas as well as their dress. I was talking some time ago to an old friend of mine who had been an inveterate fox-hunter, did his six days a week, and spent the seventh in the kennel; if you asked him what Sunday it was, you always got the same answer, "Infliction Sunday."

I asked him how he was getting on in the hunting line.

“Hunting, my dear fellow; why, I have given it up years ago—all humbug! What on earth is the use of a man making a guy of himself, putting on a pink coat, top-boots, and uncomfortable leather breeches, and for what?—to gallop after a lot of yelping dogs, and to catch a fox which is of no earthly use to any one when he is brought to hand; endangering your neck, breaking fences, and destroying land and the crops. Hunting is an idiotic fashion; half the men only hunt for the sake of dress, and for mounting the pink. If they must hunt, why not dress like reasonable beings, in comfortable cords, gaiters, and a shooting-jacket? Ah! then you would not see half the men out you do now. I am quite ashamed to think I ever hunted. Just come and look at my shorthorns, will you?”

In sporting parlance, I was “knocked clean out of time;” this was the inveterate six-days-a-week man.

“But you shoot?” I asked, seeing it was necessary to say something.

“Oh yes! I shoot, and fish occasionally, when the May-fly is up—anything but hunting. There, what do you think of that bull?”

Shooting, too, is wonderfully changed. Where are the high stubbles we so eagerly sought on the

first of September?—gone, gone for ever. The reaping-machine cuts it off now as close as the cloth on a billiard table.

It has often been said the birds are wilder at present than they were: admitting this to be the case, the cause probably is the high state of cultivation, and nothing more. There is not the cover there was formerly to hold them, and therefore they are more difficult to get at. Turnips are now sown in drills, and not broadcast, as grain usually was. If you work down the drills, the birds see you, and are off the other end: the only way is to take them across. Yet there are thousands of places where the cover is good and plentiful; and where this is the case the birds lie as well as ever.

Game is scarcer than it was, except on manors that are highly preserved: it must be remembered that where there was one shooter formerly, there are twenty now. It is a difficult matter at present to rent a shooting, for directly there is anything good in the market it is snatched up at once.

The general style of shooting of the present day is odious—large bags are “the go.” In some countries it has done away with the noble pointer and setter altogether; nothing but retrievers are used. The guns, beaters, and keepers are all in a line: a gun, then a keeper with a retriever, a beater,

another gun, and so on. The word is given, and away they go, taking a field in a beat. As you fire—possibly there are two or three guns popping at the same bird—a keeper falls out, and finds it with his retriever, whilst you are going on. Can this be called sport? If is nothing more than pot-hunting, wholesale butchery. Give me my brace of pointers and setters, and let me shoot my game to points; there is some pleasure in that. What can be a more beautiful sight to the shooting man than to see a brace of well-bred dogs, ranging and quartering their ground like clockwork, backing and standing like rocks, steady before and behind, and dropping to fur and wing, as if they were shot? Working to hand, and obeying your slightest word—beautiful, intelligent creatures—there is some pleasure in shooting over such animals as these.

Then driving is another pot-hunting system, and does no end of harm; and so those who practise it will find out before many years are over. More game is wounded and left to pine away and die than many have an idea of—a more cruel and unsportsmanlike system has never been thought of, and I much regret it has its votaries. A heavy hot luncheon from a Norwegian kitchener is now the correct thing—heavy eating and drinking must form a prominent feature in the day's programme, otherwise it is not sport.

A few men are still content with their sherry-flask and sandwich, and I would back these to beat the others into fits in a day's sport. One does not go out to eat, but to shoot, and a man that has laid in a heavy luncheon can neither walk well up to his dogs nor shoot straight after it.

Great improvements have been made in guns. The old flint that took half an hour to load was a bore; the flint had every now and then to be chipped and renewed, the pans fresh steeled, the touch-hole pricked, powder put in the pan, and even then there were constant misfires and disappointments. The flint in time gave way to the percussion, a great improvement; but there are many inconveniences with this; unless the nipples are kept clean, and the gun washed each time after using, constant misfires are the consequence. Then, in cold weather it is no end of trouble to get the caps on. With half-frozen fingers it is a difficult job; but this has been remedied by a cap-holder, which sends the caps up with a spring as you want them. With both flint and percussion there were great inconveniences in loading; the spring of your powder or shot flask might break, and then you had to judge your charge till they were repaired. All this trouble was put an end to by the introduction of the breech-loader, which has not half the danger, is ten times

quicker, and much more convenient in every way ; the ammunition more easily carried, and there are very few misfires. The gun wants no washing, merely a rag passed through, and it is clean. But I am not going into the subject of guns and all their improvements ; I have merely mentioned these to show the great stride that has been made in the last fifty years in shot guns.

Steeplechasing and racing I must touch on, and the little I have to say will not be in its favour.

The hateful passion of betting is slowly but surely ruining the turf ; for there are not the same class of men on it that there were thirty years ago.

Where do you see fine old sportsmen like the late Sir Gilbert Heathcote ? He raced for the pleasure of racing, and so did many others who never betted a shilling ; but it is all altered now, and not for the better.

Young men—ay, and old ones too—ruin themselves by betting ; Government and other clerks squander their salaries away, which might maintain them, and perhaps a mother or a sister who is totally dependent upon them ; the butlers and footmen pawn the family plate *to meet their engagements* ; and the shop-boy is often detected *in flagrante delicto*, with his hands in the till, purloining a half-crown or two to enable him to go with Mary

Hann to 'Ampton. You are pestered with letters from tipsters—scoundrels who know just as much of a horse or racing as they do of the man in the moon. The man from whom you can get nothing else, is always ready with his advice on the momentous subject of “what to back” for this race or that, quite ignoring the question of whether he really does or does not “know anything,” to use turf parlance.

Betting will never be put down entirely, but much might be done. Were I to commence racing again, I would hit the ring and the betting fraternity as hard as I could to scare them from backing my horses for the future. This cannot always be done, but after one or two such lessons people would be shy of burning their fingers over my stable. I daresay I should be called an “old curmudgeon,” “selfish brute,” and “no sportsman;” but after all said and done, you race to please yourself, not the public. You have to pay the hay and corn bill, trainer's expenses, and, above all, entry fees, far the heaviest item in the whole list; and surely, if any money is to be had over a race, the owner should be allowed “first run” at it.

We see no Alice Hawthorns or Beeswings now-a-days; racing men cannot afford to let their colts or fillies come to maturity: most are broken down

before they are three years old. Government ought to interfere and put a veto on two-year-old races; this done, and the One and Two Thousand, the Derby, Oaks, and Leger made for four-year-olds, then we might hope to see our racehorses and hunters coming back to their former stout form. But this we shall never see. John Bull, with his proverbial stubbornness, will stick to his old line.

I was one and twenty years riding and racing in France, and was highly amused when the French first began sending over horses to us; we generously allowed them seven pounds—half a stone. How I laughed and chuckled in my sleeve when I heard this! After a little time Mr Bull found this would not do, so he came to even weights; but he received such a lesson with *Fille de l'Air* and *Gladiateur*, that it made the old gentleman stare considerably, and pull rather a long face.

Racing men, I will tell you what you probably already know, but will not admit—the French could better give us seven pounds than we them: their three-year-olds are nearly as forward as our four-year-olds.

The climate of France is warmer than ours, horses do better and furnish quicker there, and the time is not far distant when they will beat us as easily as we used to beat them. It is no use disguising it;

it is a fact, and a fact, too, that is being accomplished; for no one will deny that the French already take a pretty good share of our best stakes. They have a climate better suited for horses, they buy our best sires and mares, have English trainers and riders, therefore what is to prevent them from beating us? They have done it already, and will continue doing so.

We have found out that when we take horses over there we are generally beaten, and this alone ought to convince us that the French horses are more forward than ours. Racing now-a-days is nothing more than a very precarious speculation, and the practice of some on the turf to gain their own ends is anything but (not to use a stronger word) creditable.

Within the last few years, gentleman after gentleman has left the turf disgusted and disheartened; and well they might be, for if a man is not very careful, there is no finer school than a racecourse to pick up swindling, dishonesty, and blackguardism.

Your fashionable light-weight jocks of the present day have their country houses, their valets, their broughams, hunters, and what-not. The old riding fee of £3 for a losing race and £5 for a winning one is seldom heard of except at little country

meetings. Trainers and jockeys are at present much bigger men than their masters; and why? because they allow them to be so; they may owe them a long bill, or be foolishly good-natured in putting their servants on the same footing as themselves by undue familiarity—‘Hail fellow well met’ with them.

Racing will never be what it was again, for the reasons I have mentioned. Speculation is too rife to allow it a healthy tone. Shortly but few gentlemen will be left as racing men, and the turf will be represented by the lower five, and men to whom the meaning of the words honour, honesty, principle, and conscience, are unknown.

Coursing too, a healthy and fine amusement, even this cannot be enjoyed without the presence of the betting fraternity, bawling and shouting. A clean sweep should be made of them.

Pigeon-shooting as well. Although I am not an admirer of this pastime (sport I will not call it), yet one cannot stroll down to Hurlingham or the Bush, to look on, but what one must be pestered with odds offered on the gun or bird. Your shady and doubtful betting men are nuisances. Who on earth wants to lose a lot of money to moneyless scoundrels? But there are fools who do so, and they deserve to be fleeced.

Many of our old sports have died out. The Ring is a thing of the past, and so is the Cock-pit. I am savage enough to say I liked a prize-fight and a cock-fight. When it was on the square, a prize-fight was a most exciting scene. Yet both have very wisely been put down, and athletic sports take their place.

I seldom see the fine old game of bowls played now. Le gras, too, has gone out.

Polo, which I think nothing of, is the rage amongst gentlemen now. I see nothing in it whatever; it is a wretched game for the *lookers-on*; but then it is the fashion.

The fine old game of cricket is totally altered. I shall have the cricketing world down on me, but I care not. I think the present style of bowling has entirely ruined the game as a game of science. There are not many Graces in the present day, nor were there many Wards of the olden time. Cricketers of the present day look like so many hogs in armour; and where one man bowls tolerably over-handed, fifty who attempt it cannot bowl at all—they are never on the spot. Consequently the balls break anywhere. I would ten times rather stand before the fastest man in England who is true than I would to a middling fast one who is not.

I remember, many, many years ago, at the Royal

Clarence Cricket Club—alas! defunct (I have the button still)—which had its ground on Moulsey Hurst, taking old Ward's wicket the third ball with a round-hander. It was a bit of practice we were having: I was a lad at the time, and the old gentleman had stuck half-a-crown on the centre stump for me to bowl at: he had no doubt played carelessly, wishing to give me a chance. He looked surprised at seeing his wicket fall. He coolly put them up again, and on the centre stump was a sovereign.

“There, young fellow,” he said, “bowl at *that*.” I did bowl at *that*, till I was almost ready to drop, but *that* never came into my pocket. Yes it did, though, but not by taking his wicket. I shall never forget the fine old gentleman, with his bat nearly black with oil and age. Cricket still holds, and always will deservedly hold, a high place in our English sports.

Boats and rowing have made immense strides for the better; the only thing I am disposed to cavil at with regard to it is the training. I am inclined to think the severe preparation they have to go through to get fit, tells on the constitution of young men who are not full grown and set. But training now is so carefully looked to, that after all there may not be the danger one imagines. One thing

is certain, that it is much less dangerous to row or run a severe race *well prepared*: it is inward fat that chokes men, causes apoplexy and what-not. Men in training, if they are careful and do not catch cold, and are not too severely taxed, have little to apprehend; and this is why an experienced trainer is necessary.

Bicycling, too, is a fine healthy amusement, develops the muscles and keeps a man in wind and health: he may get all over the country and at one-tenth the former expense of railway travelling. But bicycling, like all other sports and exercises, has its abuses as well as its uses, and when one sees men flying along a road (to the manifest danger of the public) bent double over the handles of their machines, it gives one pause, as to whether crooked backs, contracted chests, and knee trouble are not in store for a future generation.

There are many lakes, large and small, in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, that cannot be either fished or shot for want of a boat. It is costly to get a boat up the mountains, and very often, especially in Ireland, there are no roads, or horses cannot traverse them. Therefore something light but safe is necessary. The Rev. E. L. Berthon, of Romsey, Hants, has invented a boat which is admirably suited for the purpose: it is a folding

canvas boat of two skins, *cannot be overset*, and is quite buoyant if filled with water. The one I have is a fishing boat ; it carries four, but two can go with comfort ; it is only 70 pounds in weight, 9 feet long, and 4 feet broad. They are made any size, as will be seen from the extract I give from the *Times*.

“ Berthon’s Collapsible Barge.— Among other scientific devices with which the ‘ Faraday ’ is supplied, with the view of facilitating the laying of the Direct United States cable, is a ‘ collapsible barge,’ the principle of which, the invention of the Reverend E. L. Berthon—a name already well known in nautical circles in connection with his perpetual log—was originally applied by Mr Berthon to life-boats, a number of which, it is stated, are in course of construction. The barge was built by Mr E. R. Berthon, the son of the inventor, and is to be used in laying the shore ends of the cable, of which it will carry from 20 to 30 tons with a very light draught of water. The proportions of length in the barge are very unusual, being nearly 2 to 1, the dimensions being, length 31 feet, width 16 feet, and depth 4 feet ; such, however, is its collapsibility, that, stowed away on the deck of the *Faraday*, it only measures 2 feet at its greatest width. The barge is cellular in construction, and when a small confining rope is cast

off it extends automatically, inhaling into its ten cells about 500 cubic feet of air. During the process of expansion, the jointed bottom boards, which are 14 feet wide, fall into their places, and, lever staunchions being placed under the gunwales, the barge is ready for lowering in a minute or two. When in the water a very substantial platform is lowered into the barge, composed of beams $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick and 1 inch planks; upon this deck the cable will be coiled, and paid over a large iron sheave at the stern-post. The barge weighs about 23 cwt., and having great powers of flotation, with light draught, is expected to be very serviceable in laying the shore ends of the new cable; the principle, moreover, appears to be one which it might be found desirable to introduce into the life-boat service."

Mine is the smallest size made, and when collapsed is only 7 inches wide. To open and launch it takes less than one minute. It also sails very well, and on lakes, with a small spritsail with brails, it is exactly the thing. A prettier and more useful little boat I never had.

I have mentioned this boat because I have often been asked about such a thing. If by any chance the outer skin should be injured—

which is not likely, for the canvas is immensely strong — it makes but little difference to the boat, and the injury is easily repaired. I can strongly recommend it to any one wanting such a thing.

But to “our mutton”—sporting of the past and the present day. Returning to olden times, our fathers and forefathers were not ashamed to run horses, greyhounds, etc., in their *own* names; now men do so more and more under *assumed* ones. This is unfortunate, and opens the door for many abuses; and the sooner it is put an end to the better.

I do not believe in the early hours at which our ancestors used to take to the field. Game is not moving very early; therefore, in partridge shooting, dogs have not such a chance of finding game as they have an hour or two later. Nine o'clock is quite early enough for the partridge or grouse shooter; about four in the afternoon is the most deadly time, because scent then begins to ascend, and the dogs catch it much quicker, and birds are then on the feed. The stubble, at this time, is the place to find partridges.

It is a great mistake to walk too fast, shooting, because much game is missed in this way; even very fast dogs require sufficient time to

make their ground good ; in thick turnips you can hardly walk too slowly.

But I must hold, these notes are growing too long under my "grey goose quill." (I am old-fashioned enough to prefer a quill pen to a steel one.) Old fellow-sportsmen, and young ones, adieu. May you have a good season, and good health and spirits to enjoy it !

DOWN THE BECK

AN ANGLING REVERIE

LIKE the dormouse, the approach of spring draws forth also the angler. So early as February trout-fishing begins in the West of England, and good sport may be had during March and April. May, however, is the month of months for the trout fisher, certainly in the Midland Counties, and wherever the May fly is found, and probably in the West as well. With the first sunny gleams of February that herald the full burst of spring, Halieus and Poietes may be seen rod in hand down their streams, rejoicing that the many cold days, during which they have been longingly fingering flies and tackle at home, are at length ended. So many eulogies have been heaped upon fishing, which culminate in the enthusiasm of gentle Isaak, the father of the craft, that the world must indeed be tolerant if it can read any more.

But between his zeal on the one hand, and the

venerable dictum of Dr Johnson on the other, lies a truer appreciation of the art of angling with a fly as being the busy man's most suitable recreation, in the strictest sense of the word, in these feverish days of intellectual and social bustle. Besides the love of sport for its own sake, fly-fishing provides numerous secondary delights and occupations for thoughtful, observant natures. Whatever be a man's hobby, he can ride it as hard as he chooses down the banks of a trout stream. The rigour of the game is all very well for whist; but fishing, with no other object than killing fish, is altogether mean and ignoble. In this pursuit the fisherman may be conchologist, ornithologist, or botanist as well—nay, he may be all at once, and probably is so if he be a devoted student of nature. The poet can throw off a sonnet while he flings his fly; the clergyman will be taught by angling, as truly as by Shakespeare, how to find sermons in stones, and books in the running brooks. Did not St Anthony convert heretics by preaching to the fishes? Like Narcissus of old, the lover may see his other self mirrored in the quiet waters. Whatever be his profession, while the angler meditatively saunters on with a blade of grass between his lips, his thoughts will sooner or later be certain to find their own peculiar bent. Even the philosopher

ought to be attracted from his study to the brook. Plutarch tells how the Pythagoreans abstained from eating fish, deeming them, on account of their dumbness, creatures most kindred to the philosophic mind. Theology itself has not scrupled to embalm the highest mysteries under the symbol of a fish ; and grave bishops at present do not disdain exploits with the salmon-rod that are duly chronicled in the columns of the *Field*. Thus, the true angler may well join Sir H. Wotton in deeming the hours spent on his favourite sport " his idle time not idly spent," even if he cannot echo his sentiment that " he would rather live five May months than forty Decembers." * We have always regretted that good Bishop Andrewes, the model of a saint, a scholar, and a divine, did not angle. What additional zest would it not have lent to those rambles of which his biographer speaks in such simple language ! " His ordinary exercise and recreation was walking, either alone by himself, or with some other selected companion, with whom he might confer and argue and recount their studies ; and he would often profess that to observe the grass, herbs, corn, trees, cattle, earth, waters, heavens, any of the creatures, and to contemplate their natures, orders, qualities, virtues, uses, &c., was ever to him the greatest

* Walton's Life of Sir Hy. Wotton.

mirth, content, and recreation that could be ; and this he held to his dying day." *

" Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude ;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers."

There is little doubt that had the writer of these well-known lines been able to tear himself from his books for any diversion, it would have been in order to angle. A great authority recommends a man weighed down with overwhelming mental trouble to learn a new language by way of diverting his thoughts from self ; it would be far more efficacious for him to sally out fishing, not, certainly, to stand for hours beside a sullen pool angling with float and worm—this would be to invite suicide—but to ramble down the bank of some winding stream, burdened with nothing heavier than a clear conscience and a light fly-rod. Then may St Nicholas speedily befriend his votary !

Now put on your flies—a green drake, by all means, if it be May—if not, nothing can be better than the " red spinner," the " coachman," and, above all, " the professor," from its taking qualities—fit namesake of Christopher North. We have reached the Beck, and this warm south wind " will blow

* Life of Bishop Andrewes by H. Isaacson, his amanuensis. Andrewes' works, Anglo-Catholic Library.

the hook to the fishes' mouth." Without the abundance of trout, which, according to Audubon, characterised the river Sehig in North America, where he "was made weary with pulling up the sparkling fish allured by the struggles of the common grasshopper," the Beck possesses—what is more grateful to the true angler—a fair amount of fish, which it requires considerable skill to hook. The local name, "beck," shows that it runs through a country which was overrun by the Northmen, and its character is not dissimilar to theirs. It has none of the abrupt headlong manner of a pure Keltic brook, overcoming all obstacles by sheer persistent force, as seen in Wales, in the Highlands, and in North Devon. Nor does it wind along in slow, deep volume, like a Teutonic brook, or the offshoot of a Dutch canal, bereft indeed of all the lighter graces which adorn a beautiful stream, but irresistible withal, and beneficent. It rather unites the two characters, meandering with crystal eddies and murmurous flow,

"Kissing the gentle sedges as it glides,"

now circumventing a hillock that could not well be sapped, and now, as befits the length of its course, flowing silently, with full streams, through a croft knee-deep in daisies and meadowsweet; lovingly cutting its sinuous S's through the sward, as Izaak

Walton carved his initials on Casaubon's tablet in Westminster Abbey; and yet again, like the Laureate's brook,

“Chattering over stony ways,
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,”—

happy combination of elements from the diverse nationalities that make up the English nation. It distinguishes the names of the parishes through which it passes in some places by the Norman addition to them of “le beck,” while they themselves frequently terminate, after the Scandinavian fashion, in “by” (*i.e.*, dwelling). However, as there are in Lincolnshire alone two hundred and twelve places which have this termination, the exact locality of this particular beck can only be dimly guessed; and, sooth to say, if the angler has a failing, it consists in a natural dislike to reveal the exact situation of his favourite “stickles” to another.

Few objects in nature are so beautiful as running water; it soothes the mind as well as the eye, and disposes to reflection, sobering the jar of contending passions in the soul as it gleams along, always different in its chequered eddies, and yet always the same. The vegetation that springs on the brink of a stream very much heightens its charms to the true angler, who is always more or less of an

artist and poet. Round this beck there are, indeed, no ferns tufting each projecting shelf, and seizing upon every bare stone and decayed tree. East Anglian scenery is woefully deficient in this element of the picturesque ; but wild flowers gem its banks,

“Thick set with agate and the azure sheen
Of turkis blue and emerald green
That in the channel strays.”

At every turn the marsh marigold blazes in brilliant golden clumps, while the water violet and bladderwort, most curious of our water-weeds, find place round many of the deeper pools. Overhead, too, hoary willows lend a great charm to the scenery, and patriarchal thorn bushes, that glitter with snow-flowers every May, and wonder at returning winter as they view their whiteness reflected below, while abundance of forget-me-nots, “for happy lovers,” seek the most retired spots. Too often in the south of the county, as, for instance, round Croyland Abbey, lines of melancholy poplars disfigure the prospect, as they do (alas ! *did*) round Metz, Avignon, and other French towns. It is curious, by the way, that so vivacious a people as the French should be fond of this, the most *triste* of trees. Here, however, willows are in exact keeping with the landscape ; and as they turn the glaucous under-surface of their leaves to

the light in the shivering breezes, instead of sadness, they speak of joy to the angler, for it is just when these capfuls of wind blow that the lazy trout in the holes under their shade rise eagerly at the fly. Once every year, in the city church of St James, in accordance with a benefactor's will, a sermon on flowers is preached from some floral text, to a congregation mainly composed of young people, each of them careful to carry a nosegay with them to the service. A walk down the beck, to one who knows anything of botany, or, better still, who really loves our wild flowers, is in itself a perpetual sermon. And how much are its exhortations strengthened if the angler be somewhat of an ornithologist ! What a joyous melody proceeds from the ivy-covered fir, as Will Wimble* makes his way to the beck !

“That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never can recapture
The first fine careless rapture.”

On this sunny bank, in the first gleam of spring sunshine, may be noticed a sprightly little bird hopping along, glad to have completed his migration to our shores—the wheatear, which Tennyson aptly terms (if we read him aright) “the

* “He makes a May-fly to a miracle, and furnishes the whole country with angle-rods.”—*Spectator*, No. 108.

sea-blue bird of March." And later on, the cuckoo is first heard down this glade, gleefully "telling her name to all the hills," till June renders her hoarse, and the clear note becomes "Cuck-cuckoo! Cuck-cuck-cuckoo!" and endless is the harsh iteration if another of her family answer the challenge. Peering carefully round a thicket, too, may be seen the waterhen, proudly tempting her black brood to cross the stream for the first time; or haply a wild duck, that has sat on her eggs till the angler's foot almost touches her, flaps suddenly her wings, and skims under the overhanging alders. If the fisherman be an observant lover of nature, these and the like country sights and sounds will bring him great contentment even though he take no fish. And so speaks Dame Juliana Berners, in her "Treatyse of Fysshynge with an Angle"—one of the quaintest productions of early English literature:—"Atte the best he hath his holsom walk and merry at his ease, a swete ayre of the swete savoure of the meede flowres: that makyth hym hungry. He hereth the melodyous armony of fowles. He seeth the yonge swannes, heerons, duckes, cotes, and many other foules wyth theyr brodes. And yf the angler take fysshe, surely thenne is there noo man merier than he is in his spyryte."

Down this beck an artistic eye will find many a

feast of colour. The keeper's cottage stands on a high bank ; and a more charming domestic subject was never painted, even by Millais, than one which may be noticed there any day in August. His little girl, bare-headed and rosy-cheeked with the merriest of light-blue eyes, stands under a forest of sun-flowers, which spread their huge yellow discs above, while sunbeams break through and leave their gold on the little maiden's hair, and play round her, earnest, we will hope, of her future, as she drops a courtesy to the passing angler. A little farther on, the briony, with its brilliant berries, will festoon the grey trunk of its cherishing oak with a glory, in autumn, that cannot but charm the eye. The wild hyacinths of April are like a fold of blue sky that has descended upon the wooded hollows. In the thatch of the labourer's cottage is one deeply-set window, with a few tiles under it, on which lichens and moss have established a footing. It has just rained, and the contrast between their vivid greens and the brilliant red tiles is delicious. It is thus that much of the monotony inseparable from a dull country may be relieved, by judiciously educating the vision to find beauties where ordinary eyes see nothing unusual. The pensiveness of an angler's "sad pleasure" will be found agreeable leisure for this purpose.

The various animals again to be found down the Beck, and the intimate acquaintance which can be made with them in their native haunts, form by no means the least of its charms. It is wonderful how tame all wild creatures become, and how their characters expand to men, who, like Waterton and Thoreau, the American naturalist, take pains to gain their confidence. The water rats, timid enough when any other foot approaches, look with fearless friendship on the gentle angler. At his ease he may watch them perched on a raft of drifted sticks and weeds nibbling the arrowhead with the utmost composure, or swimming about like a miniature colony of beavers. It is cheering to reflect, when they are seen under such circumstances, that although the miller may owe them a grudge for undermining the banks of his dam, they are of all animals the most harmless to the farmer. He is too often, however, apt to confound them with the destructive pests of the granary, and (though they are really voles and not rats) to lump all together as vermin, and issue an edict of universal extermination accordingly. What a blessed day will it be for the lower animals when farmers imbibe a taste for natural history! At dusk may often be discerned down the Beck another innocent creature, the hedgehog, long remorselessly hunted down be-

cause vile calumnies had attached themselves to him of eating partridges' eggs and being addicted to sucking milk from cows. The latter accusation is simply an impossibility, while as to the former, we are afraid it is too true that he has a sneaking liking for eggs ; but the damage he does is infinitesimally small, when not computed by gamekeepers' arithmetic. A pair of hedgehogs making love in their curiously awkward fashion, puffing and blowing like grampuses, is a strange sight ; while the piglings, before their spines have grown, form the most amusing of pets. About the saddest spectacle that we ever witnessed was an old hedgehog that had been cut asunder by a train, at a railway crossing, while her brood of six or eight were still round her, unharmed and wondering what had happened. We transported the poor orphans to the nearest damp ditch and left them to the rough care of Mother Nature. Not very far from the Beck is a colony of badgers, an animal much persecuted where any linger in other parts of the country, but in this East Anglian shire acquiring a decided commercial value. Anything that will encourage foxes is here greatly in request, consequently badgers are deemed useful creatures in a cover, as they make earths which afterwards tempt Reynard to take possession. An angler is a subject of perpetual wonder to cows ;

but too often as he turns round from the water's edge in some rich meadow, he finds himself the centre towards which the curved fronts of two or three oxen converge uncomfortably close, literally placing him on the horns of a dilemma. The sleek heifers, however, approach him without any signs of attack or trepidation, and often run the risk of being caught as he rapidly draws his flies back for a cast. Tame ducks and water rats are frequently thus caught; but the most singular coincidence of this kind happened to a friend who, on going down the Otter to fish, had to cross a bridge. Whirling his flies over this as he passed, a swallow, darting underneath, took one and was captured. On his return in the evening he again whisked his flies over the bridge, and a bat, snapping at one under the arches, was taken in the same ignominious manner.

All this time, as is not uncommon with lovers of nature, we have lost sight of our main purpose in coming down the brook—fishing, to wit. The art boasts a long descent, according to Walton, the highest authority to whom a fisherman can bow. "Some say it is as ancient as Deucalion's flood; others that Belus, who was the first inventor of godly and virtuous recreations, was the first inventor of angling," with much more to the same purport. It

is a curious commentary on the aristocratic principles of the fifteenth century to find Dame Berners, in the aforementioned "Treatyse," confining the sport to the well-born. She could not imagine it a recreation of the multitude, or even of "ydle persones." With her it is emphatically "one of the dysportes that gentylmen use." Her enthusiasm for the sport knows no bounds, and must have made many generations of Englishmen anglers. The treatise evidently supplied the idea of "Walton's Angler," the book which next to "White's Selborne," has gone through more editions than any other secular work in the language. "It shall be to you a very pleasure to se the fayr bryght shynynge scalyd fysshes dysceyved by your crafty meanes, and drawen upon lande," she says; but, either fishermen have become less skilful since her days, or trout more timorous, if we may judge from her wonderful frontispiece of a man angling (and that successfully) with a rod like a flail, and tackle resembling the trace of a carriage.

Neither the salmon, monarch of the salmonidæ, nor the lovely grayling, which is only found in midland and Welsh waters, is to be expected in the Beck. Still the common river trout is no mean antagonist for an angler's mettle. Of all fish trout are most vigilant and suspicious; the least unwary movement, adventuring even a hand

out of shelter or into bright sunshine, incautiously thrusting his head over the bank, or interfering in any way with the skyline, will certainly betray the angler. He may gain a slight advantage over their craft, however, by remembering that their habit is to feed with their heads to the stream. A beginner may rest assured that the golden secret of success in trout-fishing is to keep well out of the fishes' sight by availing himself of every natural cover, a tree-trunk, bush, &c., or by approaching the stream, if he is very much exposed, in a stooping position. He must, for the most part, learn, by observation, the many singular habits and characteristics of his quarry, and here it is that the old fisherman excels the tyro. The remarkable manner in which the fish's colours change with the nature of the stream in which it lives, is one of these curiosities of the trout. There is all the difference in the world between a fish taken from the chalky streams of Wilts and one that inhabits the dark peaty burns of Devon or South Wales, while both are inferior in beauty to the red-spotted lusty fish of a Nottinghamshire river. Internally they are of two types, one with red flaky flesh, like salmon, the other white; these variations, however, frequently run into each other. The practical fisherman only can appreciate the great diversity of activity which exists in fish of different sizes

and streams, and probably in the same fish in the prime and end of the season. In one bickering rivulet the trout will all be vigorous and bold, leaping out of the water when hooked and dying hard, "game to the back-bone," in sporting phrase. In a sluggish brook the fish seem often to participate in its idiosyncrasy, the larger ones tamely surrendering after a few monotonous struggles, the little trout diving to the bottom, and, like tench, hiding their heads in the mud. We have had to stir such fish up with the landing net before it was possible to do anything with them. Another curious fact is, that if a fish be taken out of a favourite hole, another will almost always be found to have replaced it the next day. Perhaps the most remarkable theory which has been advanced concerning the intelligence of trout is that of Sir H. Davy in "Salmonia," which he terms their "local memory." A brief outline may furnish one more subject of observation to the philosophic angler. Sir H. Davy asserts that if a trout be pricked with a fly (say a blue upright), and then escape, he will never rise again in the same pool to that particular fly while the surrounding circumstances are the same. Drive him, however, down to another hole, or wait till a flood has changed the aspect of his familiar haunt, and he will take it as greedily as a fish that has

never experienced the deceit of an artificial fly. The associations of bank, stones, tree-trunks, &c., in his hole, act like visible mentors, and remind him, as the fly passes overhead, that it was when surrounded by their associations he was simple enough to rise to its fascinations. Solving such questions as these is one of the numerous secondary delights of fly-fishing. Another speculation which may be pointed out to anglers of an inquiring turn of mind, is to demonstrate why sluggish, muddy streams invariably produce better fish than the sparkling Devon or Welsh brooks. Thus in the Beck, down which our ideal fisherman is wandering, the largest fish which has been taken of late years weighed three pounds and a half, while trout of a pound and a half in weight are by no means uncommon. Three-quarters of a pound is a fair size for the fish of mountainous streams, while the majority of their trout do not exceed half a pound. Doubtless, the greater abundance of worms and ground bait in a muddy brook contributes to the larger size of its fish, but it certainly is not the sole cause of their superiority.

The flies which the modern angler imitates in fur and feathers, belong mostly to the families which entomology knows under the names of *phryganææ* and *ephemerææ*. All anglers should

know something of these curious tribes; and nowhere is a better account of them to be found than in that fascinating book, "*Salmonia*." The *phryganæ* (the "stone-flies" of the angler) have long antennæ, with veined wings which fold over each other when closed. The eggs of the adult flies are laid on the leaves of willows or other trees which overhang the water. When they are hatched, the larvæ fall into the stream, collect a panoply of gravel, bits of stick, shell-fish, &c., to surround them, and after feeding for a time on aquatic plants, rise to the surface, burst their skins, and appear as perfect flies. The *ephemeræ* (or "May-flies") were noticed so long ago as Aristotle's time, in connection with the brevity of their life. They may be known by carrying their wings perpendicularly on their backs, and by several filaments or long bristles protruding from their tails. Their aqueous existence, like the stone-flies', sometimes lasts for two or three years; but as flies their life is thought never to exceed a few days in length, often but a few hours. In fact their life is, to all intents and purposes, over when their eggs are laid, and this function takes place directly they emerge into the winged state. Besides these, however, there are multitudes of nondescript flies used by those anglers who commit themselves to the persuasive

powers of the fishing-tackle maker, and fill their fly-books with his gorgeously-coloured creations ; but with the stone-flies, May-flies, and other simple flies previously enumerated, most real anglers are contented.

The greatest nuisance to the fisherman on the banks of the Beck are the hovering swarms of flies and gnats. Nature's profusion is almost inexhaustible in this division of her kingdom. In hot, sunny weather, they persecute the angler till he well-nigh gives up his sport, and betakes himself to moralize how his situation, lonely though it be, is no inapt type of a man's spiritual loneliness in the midst of that crowd of his fellows called Society,

“Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies.”

Yes, here is the whole winged legion avenging, as it were, the slight the angler puts upon them by his grotesque imitations, in number and description more fell than Walton ever imagined in the marvellous flies he directs his disciples to dub—“the Prime Dun, Huzzard, Death Drake, Yellow Miller, Light Blue, Blue Herl,” and all the rest ! It would require a piscatorial entomologist to identify them ; and when they buzz around their victims, how well can these enter into Dante's grim fancy of the

wicked in hell being exposed naked to the stings of wasps and flies! It is useful, however, to be thus reminded that even so innocent a sport as angling has its drawbacks. Perhaps such small annoyances should be received as part of the discipline of fishing; winged blessings they then become, modes of teaching unpleasant, perchance, at the time, but none the less fraught with profit to the true angler, who is always more or less of a moralist.

It is time, though, to turn homewards. Our endeavour has been to depict some of the charms connected with angling, and to recommend it as a recreation specially adapted for the feverish agitation of modern social life. Over and above its immediate end, it is a school for moral virtues and the observing faculties which cannot be too highly honoured. The fisherman, like the poet, must be born; but he owes his success, even more than the poet, to perseverance and observation. However long the sport may be intermitted, when a man has once tasted its joys, and imbibed a thorough love of angling, he resumes it with eagerness on the first favourable opportunity. Nay, the taste is one which deserts not its votary in death. Few angling reminiscences are more touching than the scene which his daughter has described so patheti-

cally, when poor Christopher North lay on his death-bed. In the intervals of his malady, he had his fly-books brought to him, and derived a melancholy pleasure from taking out his old favourites one by one, and lovingly caressing their bright plumage and carefully tied wings, as they were spread out on the sheets. It must be confessed that angling is justly open to the charge of being a solitary, taciturn, meditative sport, which shuts a man out from his kind. We are cynical enough to fancy that if he be shut up with Nature instead, he will suffer no great harm. Indeed, to admit the impeachment is only tantamount to owning that fishing, after all, is but of this world, and necessarily an imperfect energy. Herein lies its chief excellence in the eyes of hard workers; so there is no need elaborately to refute the objection. Let a man try it, and *solvitur ambulando*. So good is it that the aforesaid Dame Juliana indulges in no exaggeration when she says—pardon once more an angler's loquacity—"Ye shall not use this forsayde crafty dysporte for no covetysenes to th'encreasyng and sparynge of your money oonly, but pryncypally for your solace, and to cause the helthe of your body and especyally of your soule." Though it be to our own loss, we would nevertheless invite every reflective mind to

the Beck, to derive inspiration and satisfaction from communion with the simple joys of nature. May skill and perseverance there bring the angler the usual happy results, and—blessing of blessings where fishing is concerned—may his shadow never be less !

M. G. W.

AN APOLOGY FOR FISHING

EVER since the time when the famous definition of angling as a combination of "a stick and a string with a worm at one end and a fool at the other" was first given to the world, it has been the custom of a large section of society to disparage the particular sport, which has for its object the catching of fish, very much more than any of the other developments which the killing propensity takes among sportsmen. When a man mentions that he is going off on a fishing expedition, the announcement is not met with the respect which is accorded to him who proclaims the fact that he has it in contemplation to spend a day in beating the turnips for partridges, or riding across country in pursuit of a fox. People have a provoking way of smiling when fishing is spoken of; and when they meet you, armed with the necessary paraphernalia which makes up an angler's equipment, their countenances directly assume either an amused expression, indicating a state of feeling not very remote from absolute pity, or a look of delicate forbearance which is almost the more difficult to bear of the two.

There surely never was any pastime regarded with so little respect as this of fishing. But one good quality (that of patience) is ever identified with it; and even that, when connected with this particular sport, is sometimes spoken of in a disparaging tone; so that it is by no means an uncommon thing to hear a man brag of his deficiency in this respect, saying, "I've not got patience enough for that sort of thing"; as if the fact redounded enormously to his credit.

"Going fishing?" says your hearty friend as he meets you in the hall, equipped for the sport, "You must be hard up for some amusement—for of all the deadly-lively proceedings—"

"Going fishing?" says another. "Well, it's certainly too early in the season for anything else in the way of sport; but still—"

The very partisans of fishing, too, help, in a certain way, to bring it into discredit. What a literature it has! The literature of all sport is apt to be trying; but this of fishing is surely especially disastrous. The facetious element always figures here in such grievous force. Nor only that. Dreadful conventional forms of expression, phrases in inverted commas, involved ways of expressing a simple thing, abound—so that one meets continually with such expressions as the "gentle craft" and the "finny

tribe." The sportsman who devotes himself to fishing is called a "member of the piscatorial fraternity," or a "brother of the angle," or a "disciple of 'old Izaak,'" or by some other roundabout and exasperating designation. Why it is that people who write on this particular subject cannot express their ideas in plain English and avoid such forms of speech as the above it is difficult to say ; but so it is.

These stereotyped phrases are to be ranked among the conventionalities of "piscatorial" literature. Another of these is a perpetual insistence upon the contemplativeness of character which this particular sport tends to develope in those who engage in it. The fisherman is supposed to be left by his pursuit at leisure to ponder and reflect on all sorts of abstract questions wholly unconnected with what he is about. Fishing is called the contemplative man's recreation, and seems, indeed, to be looked upon by a very large section of society as a sort of excuse for mooning. For my poor part I confess that it seems to me that the fact is far otherwise. If there is one thing more than another necessary to fishing, it is that the man who engages in it should have all his wits about him, and be thoroughly absorbed in what he is doing. A fisherman who took to being contemplative would, I fancy, stand but a poor chance of catching anything, and would certainly find him-

self involved in many difficulties connected with the management of his rod and line. While he was contemplating, his fly would speedily get itself fastened to some neighbouring tree, or fixed, may be, into some unattainable part of the contemplative one's own costume; while, if the line were suffered to remain in the water, the flies would certainly be carried by the current into a bed of weeds, or get twisted round a stone at the bottom of the river.

The study of the beauties of nature, again, is an occupation which angling is supposed to lend itself to. Yet even this, as it seems to me, is hardly likely to be carried very far by the really keen sportsman. When walking briskly across the hill or on the moorland on his way to the river he may, indeed, take note of the picturesque outlines of a distant mountain or the rich colouring of a patch of heather and fern, just as he is conscious of the freshness of the air or the warmth of the sun; but he will hardly, when there is any fishing to do, be likely to dwell on any of these delights, however much he may revel in them at other times. When once he gets really to work he is entirely absorbed in the sport, and will think of little or nothing else till the time comes for putting up his traps and going home. And it is just this which gives such value to every form of sport, and makes them

so essential an element in the troublous life of the nineteenth century. They absorb the thoughts and confine the attention, for the time being, to what—in a comparative sense—may fairly be called trifles. You cannot occupy yourself with any deep abstract speculation when it is a question of catching a trout or bringing down a partridge.

The fact is that a prodigious amount of ignorance prevails in connection with the sport of angling. People class all forms and modes of fishing together, and include them every one under the definition given at the commencement of this paper. The prevalent idea in the minds of most people is that fishing consists of sitting in an arm-chair in a punt watching a float bobbing up and down in the water, and partaking at intervals of very flat beer served out of a stone jar by the attendant boatman. Now this—the very lowest form of fishing that exists, and, unhappily, the form under which it is the oftenest and most conspicuously presented to view—so little really represents this particular sport, that I think I am hardly speaking too strongly in saying that no real fisherman would consent to hear such a proceeding classed under the head of fishing at all. When a sportsman speaks of fishing, he is thinking either of fly-fishing or spinning, and most generally of the former.

For fly-fishing, rightly engaged in, it is not too much to claim a very high position indeed among the sports of the field; many of the qualities on which it makes demands being the same which are required for the other forms of sport, while it also implies some which are not called for in those others, except, perhaps, in that of deer-stalking.

To be a perfectly good fisherman a man requires strength, agility, spirit, quickness and accuracy of eye, a neat hand, a nimble foot, considerable ability as a tactician, presence of mind, and coolness, coupled with the power of keeping his wits always about him. Nor is this all; a fisherman must have, besides, certain moral qualifications of an exalted nature. He must be possessed of patience, perseverance, and good temper; and, in addition to all this, he must thoroughly well understand his business in all its more intricate technicalities. Let us proceed to consider some of the points here insisted on a little in detail.

In fishing for trout with an artificial fly—a branch of sport to which, with the reader's permission, we will in this 'Apology' entirely confine ourselves—it is necessary, as it is in a great many other things, that a man should thoroughly understand what it is that he is doing—how, in short, the case stands. It stands thus. He sees before

him a sheet of water, containing, as he has reason to suppose, a certain number of fish, some comparatively stationary, some darting hither and thither, all very much alive, very watchful, constantly on the look-out both for what may bring them advantage in the shape of food of divers kinds, or for what may give them cause for apprehension, in the shape of fish larger than themselves and of a predatory nature, herons, otters and, above all, men. To these creatures, vigilant, timorous, suspicious, it is the angler's business to present an object which they are to suppose is an insect which has dropped into the water and is floating down with the stream more or less near to the surface. If the fisherman succeeds in conveying this impression; if his counterfeit insect is a successful piece of imitation; if the fly which it imitates is one for which the fish has a liking, and if the fish itself happens at the particular moment to be "on the feed"—if all these conditions are fulfilled, then it will happen that the trout will rise swiftly through the water, will seize the bait, and the fisherman's object will be gained. This desirable consummation is, however, harder of attainment than might be supposed.

Very much is implied in the bringing that transaction which has just been described to a successful issue. If the particular portion of the stream into

which you throw your fly is not the spot where a trout lies, if your fly is not well imitated from nature, or does not represent the kind of insect which the fish affects, if the hook is too little concealed, or the line too coarse, above all, if you yourself are conspicuous, standing on the bank, your chance of inducing a trout to rise is slender in the extreme. The fact is that the fisherman ought to look at this transaction from the trout's point of view and not from his own. Of the fishing-rod and line, and of the person who manipulates them, the trout must be kept wholly unconscious. This sounds a simple statement enough; but it does, in fact, imply a great deal. In the first place it implies that both the water and the atmosphere shall be in a condition favourable to the mystifying and confusing of the fish which we are bent on capturing. The atmosphere should not be bright and clear to an excess, nor, by rights, the water either. The water, again, should be, to a certain extent, troubled and agitated. This is effected in a running stream by the current; but in lakes and calm, deep rivers, especially in the former, it can only be brought about by a certain amount of wind, and for lake-fishing it may therefore be confidently asserted that a slight breeze is absolutely indispensable. A line falling on perfectly smooth water,

however fine and delicate such line may be, or however skilfully cast, will make a certain amount of splash, which would awaken the misgivings of any fish which happened to be near.

One of the greatest of all the difficulties connected with the catching of fish is that experienced by the sportsman in keeping himself out of sight. At the first glimpse of a man moving by the side of the river, every fish at once darts away as fast as his fins can carry him. To this assertion there are few people who would venture to demur; and yet how common it is to see a fisherman placed on a high bank, with his whole figure in strong relief against the sky, and moving down the water, with all the fish in the river facing him as they lie with their heads up-stream. It can only be by some strange accident that he will take a fish under such circumstances.

Almost the first thing which the fisherman should think of in setting about his business is to conceal himself as much as possible. There are several ways in which this may be effected. In the first place, if the wind will at all allow of it, he should always fish up stream, as he will then have the backs of the fish turned towards him instead of their faces. Fishing up stream is more difficult and more laborious than fishing down, the current

bringing the line back almost as fast as it is thrown in, so that the labour of casting it is almost incessant. Still, for the reason given above, it is better. It is good again for the angler to get behind some big rock or bush large enough to hide the greater part of his figure, remaining there, with as little motion as possible, till he has thoroughly fished every speck of water within his reach. Or if there are no bushes or rocks to be had for purposes of ambush, it behoves him to crawl along on the lowest part of the bank on his knees, aiding himself with the hand which is not engaged with the fishing-rod, and sometimes even to wriggle himself along after the manner of a snake—anything to diminish his conspicuousness.

Now all this is not by any means easy of accomplishment. To creep along in the manner just described, encountering some obstacle at almost every step—huge stones which, unless he is very careful, he tumbles over, small tributary streams which he plunges into—to get over and through all these difficulties, in a doubled-up position, which renders feats of agility very difficult indeed to accomplish, is not an easy task, especially as all the time he has to wave his line round and round in the air, to be ready for a long cast when he at last sees his way to that consum-

mation. This is arduous work, depend on it, and yet, short of this, I don't know how, under some circumstances, his object is to be obtained. For fly-fishing, to be attended with success, is not a simple operation, but, on the contrary, a very complicated one, as any proceeding involving so exceedingly intricate a *ruse* as this one does, inevitably must be. That it *is* a *ruse* there can be no sort of doubt. Unless you succeed in taking this creature in, you will never succeed in capturing him. This is no open onslaught, as is the case in shooting and hunting. Strategy is your only chance, and the more deeply laid your plot, the greater is your chance of succeeding.

There is one element in the construction of this deeply-laid scheme which requires to be considered with an especial carefulness. The structure of the fly which is to be set before the trout on whose capture we are bent is an ingredient in the transaction the importance of which must by no means be overlooked. It should of all things—and this is a point not enough considered by the makers of these little works of art—be one which looks well in the water. There are many flies sold which appear perfectly right and natural while they remain out of the water, but which, when once they are thoroughly wetted, assume an entirely different and most in-

ferior appearance. The loose wool and feather strands, which form the body of the fly, get matted together and the whole mass of them much reduced in size; the wings cease to stand out away from the body and from each other, and the hook, owing to the reduction of the size of the fly generally, which is effected by the tightening influence of the water, is left much too bare and prominent. The best way to obviate these difficulties is to make the body of the fly somewhat fuller and more fluffy than it is intended to be, and to dress it as far down towards the bend of the hook as is compatible with symmetry of structure. The hook is sure to be conspicuous enough at best, but every pains should be taken to make it as little so as possible. We are particular about all sorts of minute considerations of colour and form; we refuse to allow of the deviation of the sixteenth of an inch from the right standard in the length of a tail, or of the faintest false shade in the colouring of a wing—in all these matters we are exact and scrupulous, and rightly so; but is it quite consistent with such close attention to detail that we should be indifferent to so remarkable a deviation from the right model as is found in the immense and conspicuous hook which protrudes beyond the body of our counterfeit insect, and which seems

quite as much calculated to attract attention as any other part of the fly? Of course, to some extent, this cannot be helped, the hook being a necessity of the fisher's case, but surely it might in many instances be much more carefully concealed than it is. The fly might, for instance, be dressed not actually on the shank of the hook, but on a piece of gut or bristle attached to it and hanging loose on the hook so as almost to hide it. In putting on a worm as a bait—the worm having the advantage of being the real thing—we take the utmost pains to conceal the hook; in putting on the fly—which has the disadvantage of being not the real thing but a counterfeit—why should we not do precisely the same thing?

It cannot be insisted on too strongly and too frequently that the whole of this transaction, which we call fly-fishing, is, from beginning to end, a most elaborately carried out piece of deception. But troublesome and difficult and inseparably connected with all sorts of disappointments as it is, yet is the game unquestionably well worth the candle, fishing, when really successful, being beyond all question one of the most delightful of occupations, while even when only moderately successful, it is full of charm and interest to any one who takes it up in earnest.

DOGS I HAVE KNOWN

I WAS always very fond of dogs, but it was a long time before I was allowed to have one of my own, my parents apparently considering that dogs were composed of two equal portions of hydrophobia and fleas. My first dog was a large brown and white spaniel with a very curious temper. Sometimes he would lie on things in his kennel nearly all day, for no apparent reason. If you tried to pet or coax him it did no good, but if no attention were paid to him he would get out of the sulks and be all right in a short time. He could never be induced to go into the water to swim. I often attempted it by keeping him tied up without food and then loosing him and throwing bits of biscuit into the moat near the house. He would then pick out and eat all the bits that were within his reach by wading, but would not make the least attempt to go for a piece which was out of his depth. I once thought that I had devised a plan by which he must swim, but it failed. It was this. There was a high paling along one side of the moat with a

strip of grass about a foot wide between it and the water, and here I put the dog, thinking he would be compelled to swim out, but no ! after spending half the day whining and crouching down as if he meant to jump in, he set to work and scratched at the turf and tore at the palings with his teeth until he made a hole big enough to get through. After this I gave up trying to get him to swim. His temper was decidedly peculiar. When I called him to go for a walk, if he approved of the direction taken he would go—if not he would stand and look at me and then go straight home. Once, however, he shewed a very remarkable and amiable trait. I left home and went abroad for a considerable time, and in my absence my father died. The dog at this time had not shewn any sign of attachment to my mother, but immediately after my father's funeral, whenever he was loose, he used to run straight to the drawing-room windows, and, if my mother was there, would remain standing for hours looking in at her ; or, if the front door happened to be open, he would go in and walk quietly into the drawing-room. If his mistress were there he would lie down by her chair ; up to this time he had never tried to get into the house, and directly I returned he never attempted it again, nor even appeared to notice my mother

more than any other friend of his. Poor old Jehou, with all his eccentricities of temper I was very fond of him, and sorry when he disappeared. He went out with the carriage one day, and nothing more was ever heard of him, though rewards were offered everywhere. We were making a call and left him outside, and when we came out he was gone. However, we thought nothing of this, believing he would come home, but from that day forward the old Jehou was never seen by us.

My second dog was a magnificent fellow—I never knew or heard of one with such wonderful sagacity and apparent power of reasoning. It was a huge black and white Newfoundlander, of the colour they now call the “Landseer Newfoundland.” I got him from an old keeper, to whom he had been left by his late master. The man did not want him, and knowing that I was very fond of dogs, he sold him to me, saying at the time “He was *a’most* a Christian”; and so he really was. Our introduction was curious. I went off to see him, taking some food in my pocket to make friends with him; but the man told me that was no good—that if the dog liked the look of me he would be friends at once. When we reached the cottage, going round to the back, I saw a most noble-looking dog, who when

we approached sat up and looked very gravely at us. The keeper said, "I've brought a gentleman to see you, old man," and I then spoke to him. The dog turned and looked at me steadily for some seconds, then rising and walking slowly to me, reared up on his hind legs, and, putting one huge paw on each shoulder, began to lick my face. That was the introduction, and from that day until "Wallace's" death we were the firmest of friends. The man told me he had been broken for a keeper's night-dog, and was a first-rate guard—would never touch a child or bite a woman, but that he would bite any man or beast he was set at; and looking at his size and power I did not disbelieve him. He also warned me that no one must go near him when he was feeding. After having a full account of the dog, I went home, Wallace following me as if we had known each other for years. Soon after I had him, I went on a visit to a cousin who lived in a town in the north of England, and Wallace, who went with me, distinguished himself greatly whilst there. One evening I was to meet my cousin at his counting-house, and at the time fixed went there, my dog, of course, accompanying me. On reaching the office, finding that my cousin had gone out, I sat down and waited, and as he did not make his appearance so soon as was expected, the office-

keeper came and asked me if I would mind waiting by myself, as everything was locked up and my cousin could fasten the outer door himself (as in fact he often did). I had no objection, so all the gas but one small jet was turned out. Very shortly after the office-keeper left, the door was opened very softly, and soon a man put in his head, and not discovering me in the gloom, as I purposely made no noise, came in; and a very ill-looking customer he was. Discovering me, he started, and said something about an appointment, advancing as he spoke. Directly the man got near, with one bound Wallace was on him and had him down on his back on the floor. He tried to draw something out of his sleeve, but Wallace instantly seized his throat—gently, it is true, but enough to give him a foretaste of what he could do. I shouted to the man to lie still or the dog would kill him, and rising up and going to him found he had an iron jemmy in his hand, which I took—warning him that if he moved the dog would throttle him. I went and called the police; they came and secured the fellow, who turned out to be the head of one of the most daring set of burglars in the north. Besides the jemmy he had a brace of loaded pistols in his pocket, and would most undoubtedly have murdered me, if it had not been for

Wallace. The man had been "wanted" by the police for a long time, but they had never been able to get him, and there were great rejoicings at his capture.

Whenever I went out by day Wallace always followed me, but at night, or in the dusk, kept close to my side, with his head almost touching my leg. If he saw anyone coming towards me that he thought suspicious he would go on in front, and turning with them as they came up follow them by me, and in the same manner if anyone was overtaking me, he dropped back, and then followed them until they had quite passed. He did one other very clever thing whilst he was with me in the north. One morning I had been to the club to look at the papers, etc., and on my return home found that I had lost one of my gloves. More for the sake of experiment than really thinking the dog would ever find the missing glove, I took off the other, and holding it to him, made a motion like throwing it away, saying, at the same time, "lost, Wallace, go seek." The dog at once started off, and was away for some time—in fact, so long, that becoming uneasy, I started off towards the club. I had gone but a very little way when I saw Wallace coming along, and to my great surprise, with the missing glove in his mouth. A policeman was following him at a respectful

distance, so I went up to him and asked if he could tell me where the dog found the glove. He told me he saw Wallace running along evidently looking for something, as he occasionally stopped, and seemed to make sure of his direction; following him, he saw him enter the club, and remain there a short time. He then came out, began sniffing about on the steps, and suddenly started off briskly. The man followed, and the dog, after going along one of the main streets for some way, turned down a side street, and soon overtaking an old beggar woman, made a snatch at something in her hand, and returned at full speed. The old woman had picked up the glove on the steps of the club, and had gone off with it, and if it had not been for Wallace's extraordinary intelligence I should have lost my glove.

One day, after my return home, Wallace gave me a specimen of the education he had received from the keeper. There was a very pretty wood in part of our grounds with walks laid out in it. I was walking there with Wallace, as I thought, when suddenly I heard someone roaring out, most lustily, that the dog was killing him. I called out to know where the man was that was being killed, and he told me in the field outside, so I went out and found him on the ground and Wallace over

him—not biting or molesting him in any way, but merely looking down at the man, evidently very much puzzled as to why he made such a noise. Calling Wallace off, I asked how it happened, and the man told me that he was walking in the wood, and just stepped over the fence into the field when the dog jumped at him, and knocked him over. The fact was, that Wallace had been trained to go outside any cover when the keeper went through it, and to seize any poacher that might come out. He had been taught, too, to jump at the man and knock him down by his weight, but not to bite or injure him in any way if he made no resistance; and I expect few would have been so foolish as to do so when they saw his size and appearance.

Wallace was a most inveterate cat killer. This had been clearly part of his early education; he killed almost every cat that he could get at. Many were the unfortunate tabbies that he suddenly snapped up as they were comfortably dozing on the steps of a cottage. He would go quietly along, apparently taking very little notice of anything, when—snap—and tabby was no more, but there was one most remarkable exception, and this was our stable cat. I discovered it in this way:—One day I went into the stable

yard and saw the cat walking across to where Wallace was lying by his kennel half asleep, fully expecting to see her killed in a moment. I waited, and, to my great astonishment, saw her walk up to him, put up her tail, and rub all round him in the most affectionate manner, and as she passed his head, Wallace just looked up and gave her a lick with his tongue. Seeing me, the old dog jumped up, and, in so doing, trod on pussy's foot, who immediately turned round and bit and scratched. Wallace took no sort of notice of it, clearly thinking that such an exhibition of temper on her part was beneath his attention. We lived about twenty-five miles from town, in a very fashionable and wealthy part of the country, which made it quite a "happy hunting-ground" for the London burglars, regular gangs of whom used to come down and "work" the district, in fact, ours was almost the only house that was not broken into, and this was entirely owing to Wallace,—his sonorous bark effectually rousing everyone, and he never used it without occasion. We caught three men with a most beautiful set of burglars' tools. They had intended to try the house; Wallace roused us by barking, and as he seemed nearly frantic, we felt sure that the men were near, so, turning out the men-servants, we loosed

the dog in the garden. He soon picked up the scent of the men, and quickly ran into them in an outhouse about two miles off. Numberless were the attempts made to poison him, but he would never touch the stuff, however cunningly prepared. We constantly found poisoned liver, and things of that kind, but it was of no use—Wallace would sniff at the stuff, give it a scratch with his paw, and pass on. There was one very amusing trait in his character, and that was his determination that no one should bathe if he could help it. This came, I think, from his having, on one occasion, brought a child out of a pond into which it had fallen. By the way, he did not do it at all in the graceful way dogs are represented in goody-books, but by a firm nip in a very unromantic part of the child's body, making it roar out lustily, thereby preventing the bystanders from being at all uneasy on its account.

An amusing instance of this occurred one day. A young cousin of mine was staying with us and said he should go down to the river and bathe—asking at the same time to take Wallace with him. I consented, quite forgetting his habit. The two were away some time, but at length I saw them returning, the lad evidently in a very bad temper about something. When he came up he said "that

abominable old fool Wallace won't let me bathe ;" I asked about it and heard that Wallace sat down and watched him undress, in a very grave sort of way, but when he wanted to get into the river would not let him ; walking in front of him whenever he got near the edge and completely preventing him from getting in. The boy tried all sorts of dodges to make the dog allow him, but it was of no use. He tried to run and jump in several times, but on each attempt Wallace coolly sat down in front of him just as he thought all was clear, so that he was obliged either to stop short or tumble over the dog. When he gave it up and began to dress again, Wallace lay down and watched him, and finally trotted back with him, with an expression on his countenance that showed he clearly thought he had done his duty.

I had been warned by the man I bought Wallace from, as previously noted, that I must never go near him when he was feeding, for he would not allow anyone to approach him then, and this I found to be true ; but this habit of his caused me great alarm once. A little girl was staying in our house, and, of course, wanted to see my big dog, so I took her out to the stable yard to show him to her. Wallace was feeding when we got there, and I told her we

must not go near him then, and took her into the stables to see the horses. Whilst I was talking to the coachman, she slipped out, and on going to look for her, to my horror I saw her just going up to the dog who was still feeding. I called out to her to come back, but the coachman said, "He won't hurt her, sir; he will let a child do anything almost to him." True enough—the child went up and patted him, and the dog first looked up, gave a wag with his tail and went on feeding. When he was loosed afterwards, he came to where the child and myself were sitting, licked her hands, and then came and put his great head on my knee and looked up at me, as much as to say, "Could not you trust me with a child." I then remembered I had been told he would never touch a child, but there was one very curious point connected with this, which was that he would *never* touch food of any sort, however fond he was of it, from the hands of a child. This he had doubtless been taught, so that poisoned or prepared food might not be given him by their means.

I hardly ever saw a dog who had such very expressive eyes. Once when out with me he was attacked and bitten in the leg by a mastiff; an ill-conditioned brute that was always flying at him. Now Wallace was most good-tempered and hardly

ever fought, so I spoke to him and told him to come along, thinking the mastiff would leave him. Instead of this it seized him by the ear, and Wallace's ears were always very tender and painful in the summer; but he never retaliated—only looked at me in a sort of reproachful way, as much as to say "see what pain you have caused me." I could not stand it, and said, "Kill him, Wallace." Shaking the dog off as if he was nothing, he gave him a grip between the forelegs and the dog was dead in an instant. Wallace left him at once and came on after me as if nothing had happened. He certainly was one of the most intelligent dogs I ever met with; I kept him until he was very old, and when he was almost entirely blind, it used to be very curious to see the old fellow hunting me. When loosed, he would put down his nose and work till he got on my trail, and then, however I might have gone about and turned, he was sure to hunt up to me, and the pleased look which came into his old face when he found me and moved round my legs was very touching. However, poor old fellow, he got quite deaf as well as blind, and then to my grief I had to sign his death-warrant.

Long after this, I possessed a wonderfully intelligent dog, a pure-bred Skye terrier, one of the real

sort, with soft coat of wavy mustard-coloured hair tipped with black; sharp, prick ears, just turned over at the top; such taper paws; tail carried over the back and parting like an ostrich plume; she had dark eyes. I had her directly she could be taken from her mother, and in my bachelor days she hardly ever left me, often going in my pocket when I was riding—her head and forepaws outside. I once left her for six months with some friends whilst I went abroad, and on my return a most curious thing occurred. I drove from the station, distant about six miles from my friends' house, arriving there past nine in the evening. Fanny (that was her name) was shut up in the harness-room, but about four o'clock the next morning I was awakened by scratching and whining at my door, and on getting up and opening it, there was Fanny, who was exceptionally delighted to see me, and jumped on my bed and went to sleep. On getting up I noticed her paws were very sore and bleeding, and on going down, asked where she had been and how she had found me. It turned out thus: she had been locked up in the harness-room as usual, and this was quite 200 yards from the house; but had set to work, and scratched her way out, tearing a hole through the weather boarding close to the door-post; she then came round to a court at the back

of the house, where there was a drain-pipe in one corner through the wall, to carry off the water when it was wasted ; this she had torn at until she made the hole big enough to force her little body through, and getting into the house by an unfastened side door, made her way up to my room. But how on earth could she possibly have known that I was there ? She had not seen me for six months, and I had not been near the stable, so she could not have heard my voice, and there was not any coat or wrap of mine left in the carriage. That she had got into the house by the way I have stated was quite clear from the state of her paws, and the marks on the stable and outer court.

Fanny amused me very much on another occasion. She had been taught to beg, and I went to the kennel, a palet-in one with benches round it, and opening the door, began to talk and play with the dogs, occasionally throwing them some pieces of biscuit. I threw a bit which one of the spaniels picked up, and jumping on to the bench, began to eat it. I suppose Fanny fancied the piece very much, for she ran after the dog, jumped up on the bench in front of him and sat up and begged for it, just as she would have done had I had it. However, the spaniel did not pay any attention, but quietly munched up the biscuit. Her jealousy of

my wife, when we were first married, was most amusing. She could not bear to see us sitting together, and if I sat by my wife on a sofa, would get upon it, scramble on to my shoulders, walk round the back of my neck, and try to squeeze herself down between us. She was, too, a capital sporting dog, though for a long time I was afraid to take her out, as she was so like a rabbit or hare when moving through long grass or corn that I feared I might perhaps shoot her accidentally. However, she was always so very anxious to come with me that at length I took her, and she was quite invaluable. Birds that would rise and be off at once, if you had a pointer or setter with you, appeared either not to notice her or be fascinated by her. I knew directly I entered a field with her whether there were birds or not, and she would take me straight to them. She also retrieved beautifully. The first time I found out her powers in this way I had shot two partridges, right and left, and to my great disgust both were runners and got into some standing corn. Fanny seemed very anxious to go after them, so I let her go after one that I had marked down, and off she scampered, and to my great delight and surprise soon came back with it. On my taking it from her, she darted off again and in a little while returned with the

other. After this, of course, I always used her for retrieving, and scarcely ever lost a wounded head of game. She could bring partridges and pheasants in open ground, but if they fell in thick cover, or if I sent her after a wounded hare, she could not bring them back, but used to make a short, sharp bark to let me know she had found them. Poor little thing, she met, I fear, the fate of too many pets. We went from home leaving strict injunctions that every care should be taken of her; but, unfortunately, she sickened and died, I fear, of neglect.

And now I must tell a most wonderful piece of kindness and compassion on the part of another dog. At the time Fanny and her brothers and sisters were born, I had a fine black and white pointer dog. When Fanny and the rest were a few weeks old, their mother died, and they had to be brought up by hand, and though every care was taken of them, and they had warm sheepskin rugs on their bench, they seemed very miserable and were always crying. Whenever I went round their kennel I usually found this pointer dog sitting there looking at them through the palings, and I said one day to the keeper, "I suppose Don would like to kill them all for making such a noise." "Oh no, sir," said the man; "he pities

them quite Christian-like." "Well," I replied, "if he does, just open the kennel door and see what he will do." It was opened and the dog ran in and began licking the puppies, who crowded round him. He then jumped up on the bench, followed by them, and lay down; the puppies crawled all over him, biting his ears and tail, evidently greatly delighted to have him, and finally settled to sleep in all positions on him, the dog never moving, and seemed almost afraid to breathe for fear of disturbing them—in fact, he took them entirely under his protection, and the contorted attitudes the dog would lie in rather than disturb the puppies were wonderful. I used to think he must hurt himself; but he would never leave them, and if I got him out for a little while, thinking he must want rest, he would always run back to them, never seeming happy until he had got in with them again. This continued until they were all grown big enough to take care of themselves. It has always struck me as being the most wonderful piece of pure benevolence I ever knew of.

I once knew a very eccentric dog. He was a real old English spaniel, one of that kind you so rarely see, with long body, short legs, with great bone, grand head, jaws and teeth like a wolf's almost, and long ears that would meet round his nose.

Poor fellow, his temper was certainly unamiable, but I think this was caused by the state of his health. When he was a puppy he was troubled with insects, and a stupid groom, to show, I suppose, that he had some brains, declared he could cure him with some nostrum of his own; the effect of it being that the poor puppy's hair nearly all came off. His skin was burned in several places, and he was made so ill that for several weeks a veterinary surgeon did not think he could recover. He did though, at length, but his constitution had received such a shock that he was always subject to skin disease, and yet he could not stand the least medicine. He was a very curious animal, never showing much attachment to anyone; he would bite his best friends on the least provocation. Nothing, though, offended him so much as being laughed at, —that was an insult he never forgave. If you began to laugh at him, he would growl in a very ominous manner, and, if you persisted in it, would snap at you and give you such a bite, that you would not care to try again. If you wished to please him, you had to get a lot of old birds' nests, and give them to him one by one; he would carry them about for some time, and then he would sit down and tear them to pieces. He was not particularly fond of going for a walk with anyone; but if you got some

nests and gave him one occasionally, he would trot along with you as happily as possible. Another curious habit of his was, that he would never get out of the way for anyone. When he was trotting along he never moved from his line if he saw anyone coming; but if he saw they did not intend to move, would begin to growl and look so savage that people usually made haste out of his way. When he happened to be running down a hill, he did not growl, but merely ran against people if they did not clear out—his great weight usually upsetting them, of which he took not the slightest notice. A great friendship arose between this dog and a fine cat we had, and it was very amusing to see them together. He would walk up to the cat and begin to lick her all over, and then she would rub all round him, purring, and seeming to be very fond of him—when all of a sudden she would stop, look up in his face and spit at him, at the same time giving him two or three sharp scratches, the only notice of which that he took was to close his eyes, so that they might not be hurt. Poor dog, as I said before, he suffered from skin disease, and the medicine that you could give another dog with impunity would nearly kill him, and it was the same with any outward application. At length when, on one occasion, he was suffering very much, I took him to the hunts-

man of a pack of foxhounds, and asked if he could recommend anything, and he told me of some stuff he dressed the puppies with, that never hurt them, and gave me some. I had it applied to some other dogs, and it did not do them the least harm, so I ordered this dog to be dressed with it. It did not seem to affect him at first, but on the next morning he was found dead in his kennel. In spite of his unamiable character, which I put down to his bad health, I was very sorry to lose him, for he had more regard for me, I think, than almost anyone, and was a first-class dog for cover shooting, with me at least, for he would not pay any attention out shooting to anyone else.

I have met with two cases of decided idiocy in dogs—one occurred fully thirty years ago. It was just about the time that Pomeranian dogs were first brought into England. An old lady saw several of them abroad, and, admiring them very much, brought several home and gave them away as presents to her friends. She gave one to an uncle of mine; it was a white one, with a splendid coat, and altogether looked a model of the breed, and everyone who saw it remarked on its beauty; it had, however, very curious-looking blue eyes, and its habits were very strange. It would lie curled up on the hearth-rug in the dining-room the whole day, taking no notice

of anyone or anything, except twice a day, when regularly, about half-past eleven in the morning and at four in the afternoon, it would get up, and, if the French windows were open, would go out on to the lawn. If they were closed, it waited till the door was opened, and then going out, went each day to the same exact spot, and commenced running round and round in a circle from right to left. Having done this for some minutes, he would stop, rear up on his hind legs, and giving his head a most peculiar twist, much like the way parrots and owls twist their necks, he would then drop down again, and run the circle from left to right. Having done this, he came indoors, and lay down on the rug. He never showed the least affection for anyone, or appeared to know them. If you called out to him, he would sometimes look up in a vague sort of way, as if he wondered what the noise was; and the footman had to lead him out to meals each day, as the dog never made the least attempt to stir in search of food. The man used to say he had more trouble to make this dog feed than to keep any others from devouring whatever they could get at. Altogether, the dog did not seem to have the least sense in the world, and was, I think, an undoubted idiot.

The second case of the sort I met with was in a

large sort of retriever that a friend of mine had. He asked me to come and see a dog that had been given him, as it was a "very odd sort of beast," and so it was. It had the most curious coat I ever saw on a dog—very long and iron-grey, with black markings, a huge bushy tail, so big and so long that it gave one the idea that the dog's hind legs were in the wrong place, and, instead of being at the extremity of its body, were put on somewhere about the middle of its stomach. To add to everything, the dog squinted, a thing I never heard of or saw in any other dog before or since. It was not that one of the eyes was blind and did not move properly, but the eyes actually crossed one another; his head, too, was the shape of a solid parallelogram, and very narrow between the ears. The dog was fastened to a kennel, and was walking backwards and forwards in front of it, very much in the way a caged hyena does. On being loosed, it bundled off in a clumsy gallop, and soon ran right into a barrow that had been left on one of the paths. On being brought up by this obstacle, instead of jumping over it, as any other dog would have done, he moved round it, and when he found his head clear, galloped off again on the same straight line, which this time landed him in a laurel bush, through which he scrambled, and again went on in the same

direction, and this I heard was his regular habit. He had another very awkward trick, and that was, if he was walking behind you, he would come up and lay hold of your leg, not apparently with any vicious design, for if you stopped and looked down at him, there he was with his eyes half shut, holding on to your leg with his teeth, as if it was necessary to support himself by such means. After a time he would drop his jaws off your leg and go maundering along as he had done before; but it was not altogether a pleasant trick. My last interview with the brute was not an agreeable one. We were to go out duck shooting on the river, and my friend proposed taking the dog with us in the punt to retrieve the ducks. This I decidedly objected to, as a wet dog in a boat is an unpleasant companion, so he was left on the bank to follow as best he might. The dog trotted along quietly for some way, until at length we fired at some ducks, when he jumped into the river to get them, as we thought; instead of which he swam up to the punt and seizing the pole in his mouth began to bite and tear at it in the most furious way. He then tried to scramble into the boat, and getting his fore-paws on the gunwale, began to tear at the sides in the most determined manner, snapping furiously at anyone who went near him. The

only thing we could do was to try and duck him by means of the punt pole, but directly he came up again he attacked the boat afresh, so that my friend thought the best thing to do was to shoot him, which accordingly was done. I shall never forget the expression of ferocity in the dog's face or the mad way in which he tore at the sides of the boat and the punt pole.

The dog I am now about to mention was, I consider, an instance of the action of over-instruction working on naturally weak powers. When out shooting at the Cape, in the Swehamsdam district, something in the bush attracted my notice, and on riding up I found it was a pointer in the last stage of starvation. Pitying the poor deserted animal, I told one of my attendants to take it up and bring it to the waggon, which he did, and after forcing some broth down its throat, the dog seemed to revive, and with care it ultimately recovered, and turned out a very handsome animal. When it had got up its strength again, I took it out to try it. The dog ranged fairly and soon got on the scent of game, as I imagined. Seeing him drawing on very fast, I thought he had got a Korhoram in front of him, and as these birds run tremendously, I made a circle to head the supposed game; but on looking back at the dog, saw he was standing dead at a small bush.

I went back to him and tried all round it in every direction, but in vain. I then looked on the ground to see if there was one of the small land tortoises, which abound there, and which dogs will always point, but found there was not; so dismounting, I went up to the bush and then found he was standing at a small striped mouse, so I scolded him and made him come off. His next exploit was to make a splendid point at a pair of cast-off Hottentot "crackers" which were lying in the bush, bringing up in his gallop in really magnificent style. On rating him for this, he fixed all his attention on me, and though he ranged well, kept his eye whenever possible on me, and if I stopped pointed at once, or even if I held out my arm. His last grand feat was a dead point at something that I thought was a piece of dead stick lying on the ground, and I was just on the point of taking it up to give him a cut with it for being such a fool when I discovered that it was a puff adder; so calling the dog off, I blew it to pieces with a shot, but my escape was a narrow one. After this, I gave the dog away to a lady who took a fancy to him, as he was so handsome, and it was most ludicrous to see him in her drawing-room pointing steadily at footstools or work-boxes, or anything that was shewn him. The dog had evidently been well

broken, but its brain could not take the impression that he was only to point at game. He had a confused idea that he ought to point at anything with a scent to it, or anything he imagined his master wished him to.

NOVEMBER SHOOTING

NEARLY three months have already passed away since the shooting season began. I won't say the three best months, because snipe and woodcock are coming in, and the cream of the pheasant shooting is yet to come.

For myself, much as I like knocking over grouse and partridges, give me snipe shooting before all. It is the *fox-hunting of shooting*.

I know of nothing more exciting than getting on to a good snipe bog, when they lay well and there are plenty of them. When they rise in *whisps*, that is, several at a time, you may make up your mind they are wild and difficult to approach. In snipe shooting always have the *wind on your back*.

The snipe ever flies against the wind; therefore you have a much better shot than you would have if he were to dart away down wind.

If you take a dog, let it be a cautious, knowing old pointer or setter; the latter is the animal for this sport, because he stands the cold and water

better than the thin-skinned pointer; but I rarely take any dog but my retriever.

As regards your dress, you are almost sure to get wet; therefore I never think of putting on long waterproof boots; they are heavy and tiring to walk in; and if you do get in over them, you are obliged to turn yourself up to let the water out; but your misery does not end here, the wet generally brings your worsted stockings down at heel, and your heavy saturated boots rub the skin of your heels, or ankle bones, which cripples you for days.

Put on a pair of thick worsted stockings, and a pair of your oldest and easiest lace-up boots; if there is a hole or two in them so much the better, they will let the water out all the quicker.

I never use gaiters, they only get wet and make you cold and uncomfortable. I wear a pair of old trousers; but generally shoot in nothing but knickerbockers and stockings.

If you have a long way to drive home, a change of stockings and trousers is advisable, and instead of shoes or slippers, I put on a pair of sabots and chaussettes: these can be procured at any French dépôt. They are most comfortable and warm, and no trouble to put on.

If you are shooting on heath, brown should be

the colour of your dress ; this, indeed, is the best colour for all work.

Many places that were famous for snipe when I was a lad, are now drained or built on. And a few years hence the snipe and woodcock will be rare birds with us. There is still a land within easy reach where they are to be found—Ireland—and there I go every year for a couple of months, to a very wild part of the country, certainly, and where you must rough it ; but still I enjoy it intensely : and when I am sitting by my turf fire, with my glass of potheen beside me, my old black clay between my lips, and my tired setters stretched at their ease by my feet, I feel thoroughly happy.

There is one thing I always take with me on these Irish excursions, and that is a comfortable arm-chair. I have had it carried eleven miles over the mountains for me, to the cabin or farm, or wherever I may be. This is the only luxury I allow myself.

If you go farther afield than Ireland, and are in for nothing but snipe shooting, then be off to America ; South Carolina is your mark, and where you may blaze away to your heart's content.

The woodcock flies exactly the same as the snipe ; but it is not necessary to be particular about the wind in his case. In beating large covers or

forests, never go far in, but try the edges. These birds are also getting much scarcer, for they now take the eggs in Norway and Sweden, and eat them as we do plovers' eggs.

In looking for woodcock in cold, wet weather, if you do not find them in their usual haunts, try the *sunny* side of the wood or hill, where it is sheltered from the wind; they are remarkably fond of being where there are holly bushes.

In shooting forests or large covers use spaniels; but these dogs must be *perfectly* broken and never go out of gun range. It is a very common practice in France to have bells round their dogs' necks, so that you may know where they are; but I do not like it, it frightens the birds; and there is danger attached to it. The dogs are sometimes hung up by the collars. I once remember a very good dog, belonging to a friend of mine, being killed in this way—he was hung up in some thick underwood, and when we found him, he was dead. No hunting dog should ever wear a collar when out, under any circumstances.

November shooting is good shooting, and coverts should not, as a rule, be beaten before then, as the leaves are not off enough; a quantity of game is wounded and never found, and is left to linger and die. In November, too, the walking is much

better; it is cooler and the scent lies stronger; birds may be wilder but they are in finer condition, and remain so till the frosts come; but even then, unless it is very hard, they keep their condition. It is snow that destroys all birds' condition. A few days' snow, and birds not only fall miserably away, but they get much tamer, and immense numbers are killed by poachers, as well as rabbits and hares, which are easily tracked; and as they are not able to go at any pace, a dog with a very moderate turn of speed will run into them.

The best bit of shooting I ever had was a forest in France which I hired; it was five thousand acres, famous bottom covert in it, and noted for woodcock; there was a capital shooting lodge, furnished, four large bed-rooms, two sitting-rooms, kitchen, back-kitchen, wood-houses, &c.; cow-house, piggery, stable for fourteen or fifteen horses, orchard of three acres, kitchen-garden, and small field, a gamekeeper's house, and dog-kennel; in fact, as a shooting-box it was complete; for all this I paid four hundred francs a year (£16).

The house stood in the centre of the forest; there was a good road to it, and there was a village a mile off at which you could get anything. I had it for some years, and I never enjoyed covert shooting so much; there was fine partridge ground

all round the forest, which I had leave to go over ; part of it was mine. There were a few roebuck in the forest, foxes, and plenty of badgers ; with these last we occasionally had great fun. There was some very fair trout fishing, as well as duck shooting, any quantity of rabbits ; and I never went out without bringing home a hare or two ; there were quail in the season, and snipe too, and the woodcock shooting was capital.

For a few days in November, thousands and thousands of wood pigeons made their appearance, and were very tame from a long flight ; these were killed in great numbers. When they first arrived they were miserably poor, but after a few days they picked up, and were difficult to get at. I never enjoyed anything more than this bit of rough shooting ; everything was so convenient and comfortable ; by the bright wood fire of an evening we used to smoke, tell our stories, and spin our yarns.

The game I killed, even at the small price it fetched, paid the rent and my English keeper. I do not mean to say I sold it, but I exchanged it away for other things wanted in the house.

November, although one of the dreariest months of the year, is one of the best shooting months—certainly for general rough shooting.

I have had capital sport in Ireland in this

month, especially with the woodcock on the mountains, as well as with duck and snipe. I always carried there a ten-bore gun, because I never knew what would get up, as most of my shooting lay on the borders of Lough Corrib ; sometimes a duck or a goose would give me a shot, so I found a large gun better. The golden plover are capital fun in November. I once killed twenty-one at one shot. I was coming down Lough Corrib in my yacht, and discovered an immense number of plover on one of the small stony flat islands. I got the dingy out, and was sculled quietly down by one of the men. I got within forty yards of them, when they rose, and I gave them both barrels of No. 6 shot. I picked up one-and-twenty, but I think there were one or two more I could not find. I have had very good duck-shooting on the lake, in November, which is twenty-eight miles long, and in one place ten miles wide. My shooting yacht was one of the most comfortable ones I ever saw, only ten tons ; but there was every convenience in it and plenty of room. I used to go away for a week, and the quantities of snipe, cock, and wild fowl I brought back astonished the natives. I would run up some little creek or river of an evening and anchor occasionally ; we cooked on shore when the weather was fine ; we set the night lines, and had always

plenty of pike, trout, and eels, and in summer any quantity of perch, from three-quarters to three pounds weight each.

I am very fond of wild pheasant shooting in November; the birds are then strong, in good plumage, and worth killing.

Rabbiting, either shooting or ferreting, is capital sport; by November the fern and under cover are generally dead, and you can see the little grey rascals scudding along.

For some years I, in cover shooting,—in fact, all my shooting, have used nothing but Schultze's wood powder; perhaps it may not be quite so strong as the ordinary powder, but I am by no means assured of that; it is quite strong enough for any purpose, and has these advantages over the ordinary powder:

There is not nearly so much recoil, and in a heavy day's shooting you do not give up with your head spinning and your shoulder tender.

The report is not so loud either.

The company say, "It shoots with greater force and precision;" this may or may not be; but I am satisfied of this that it shoots *well*, and certainly does not soil the gun nearly so much as other powders.

But there is one thing that alone recommends it

to me ; that is, the smoke never hangs, and you can always use your second barrel. How often in covert shooting, or in the open, on a mild or foggy day, when there has been no breeze, has the smoke hung, and prevented you putting in your second barrel? Hundreds of times to me! But with Schultze's powder there is only a thin white smoke, which is no detriment or blind to the shooter. And there is also another great advantage it possesses, if it gets damp it can be dried without losing any of its strength. It suits all guns and climates.

SPORTING ADVENTURES OF CHARLES CARRINGTON, ESQ.

RECORDED BY "OLD CALABAR."

READER, must I confess it? I am a Cockney, born and bred in the "little village." Though I passed some eight or ten years in a Government office, yet my heart was not in the work. I had frequent illnesses, which kept me away; those days—must I own it?—were generally spent in a punt at Weybridge with one of the Keens. At Walton or Halliford I was great in a Thames punt; and I then imagined few could hold a candle to me in a gudgeon or roach swim; that I was *the* fisherman of England, *par excellence*. I am wiser now.

At last my absences from office were so frequent that I had quiet intimation to go; but, having friends who were pretty high in office, I got an annuity in the shape of ninety pounds a year. A fresh berth was procured for me at four hundred per annum, where I had a good deal of running about. This suited me much better, as it enabled

me to indulge in my proclivities. I now took to shooting, and rather gave fishing the go-by.

I believe I tormented every gunmaker in the West End to death. I was continually chopping and changing, inventing fresh heel-plates to the "stocks." I would have a thick one of horn for a thin coat, and a thin one of metal for a thick coat. Then I had them made with springs to diminish the recoil. I was laughed at by every one who knew anything about the matter; but I was so eaten up by self-conceit that I imagined no one was *au fait* at guns but myself, and would take no advice. My shooting was not what a sportsman would call "good form"; but this I did not believe.

"Dash it, Muster Carrington," said an old Somersetshire farmer to me one day; "always a-firing into the brown on 'em, and mizzing the lot. It can't be the gun, or because you wear gig-lamps. You're no shot, zur, and never will be;" but I laughed at the old fellow's ignorance. Rather rich that. I, with one of Grant's best guns, not a shot—rubbish! But I determined I would make myself a shot; so I went over to Ireland to an old friend of mine, who lived in a wild, remote part of Galway. He was a first-class sportsman ine very way; took great pains with

me, and taught me a good deal. I learnt to ride to hounds with him, not well certainly, but in my vanity I soon imagined I not only rode, but shot better than my instructor. One day, after shooting at twenty-three snipes, and only killing one, and the next missing thirteen rabbits turned out from the keeper's pockets, I was fain to admit I was not the shot I thought myself; so I betook myself back to London—a sadder, but not a wiser man. I then entered one of the pigeon clubs. Pigeon club? it was one. I won't say anything about that. If I had gone on with it I should soon have had pockets to let. I was terribly laughed at by every one, for I could neither shoot nor make anything by betting.

I then determined to try hunting, and wrote to my old friend in Ireland to procure me a couple of horses. This he did, and sent me a couple of good ones. I enjoyed the hunting more than I did the shooting, because I could ride a little, and got on better.

Sending my horses down to the country one fine morning, the next I followed them to ——, where I had taken a little box for the season. Many were my mishaps during the few months I was there, which was not to be wondered at.

I was in the famous run I am about to relate,

and one of the unfortunate victims who came to grief on that occasion.

In the county of Croppershire, and not far from the little post town of Craneford, a pack of fox-hounds was kennelled: they were under the joint mastership of two gentlemen, Samuel Head, Esq., commonly called Soft Head, and Henry Over, Esq., who was usually designated Hi Over; the secretary was George Heels: he went by the name of Greasy Heels.

A local wag had nicknamed it the "Head-over-heels Hunt;" but another aristocratic gentleman and a public-school man said that a much more *distingué* and appropriate title would be the classical one of the *Sternum-super-caput* Hunt. This it was ever afterwards called; and certainly no hunt deserved the name better, for hardly a man amongst the whole lot could ride; they were ever being *grassed*, or "coming to grief."

Men from the next county used to say to each other, "Old fellow, I am in for a lark to-morrow. I'm going to see the 'Sternum' dogs;" or, "I am going to drive the ladies over next week, when the Sternum hounds meet at the cross-roads; they want a laugh, and to see a few falls."

The huntsman to these hounds was John Slowman. He was not a brilliant huntsman, but he

could ride; he had no voice; could not blow the horn well, which was, perhaps, a lucky thing.

Somehow or other the Sternum hounds generally killed, and had a great many more noses nailed to their kennel-door than most of the neighbouring packs. The great secret of their success was that the hounds were *let alone*; they never looked for halloas or lifting, and if they did they very seldom got it. They were great lumbering, throaty, slack-loined, flat-sided animals; but they could hunt if let alone, and often carried a good head, and went along at a pretty good bat too; and as they had but few men who rode up to them, they were not as a rule pressed or over-ridden.

The Sternum gentlemen were great at roads, though now and then they would take it into their heads to ride like mad, especially when there was anyone from a neighbouring hunt to watch their proceedings. Then there were riderless horses in all directions, for the country was a stiff one, and took a deal of doing.

“Ah, gentlemen,” Slowman would exclaim, as the field came thundering up ten minutes after a fox had been broken up, “you should have been here a little sooner; you should indeed. Mag—nificent from find to finish. Don’t talk to me of the Dook’s, or the Belvoir, or the Pytchley either, nor none of

them hunts as have three packs to keep 'em agoing. Give me two days a week, and such a lot of dogs as these. I dessay the Markis will make a huntsman in time. Frank Gillard ain't a bad man, and Captain Anstruther is pretty tidy ; but there's too much hollerin', too much horn, too much lifting and flashing over the line. They mobs their foxes to death ; I kills mine."

Slowman was magnificent at these times, and felt more than gratified when compliments were showered on him on all sides.

"Right you are, Slowman." "You know how to do the trick, old fellow." "Best huntsman in Europe." "There's half-a-sovereign to drink my health."

Then Slowman would collect his hounds, nod to the whips, and return home a proud and happy man.

The Sternum hounds hunted a week later than their neighbours, and at the two meets that took place during that period they generally had large fields, and always on the last day of the season, because Messrs. Head and Over gave a grand breakfast.

On the occasion I am about to speak of, the last day of the season, a breakfast was to be given of more than usual magnificence. The hounds had had

a good season, and the masters determined that they would be even more lavish than usual.

Great were the preparations made when it was known that the neighbouring hunts were coming in force to see them, and have one more gallop before they put their beloved pinks away in lavender.

Slowman, the huntsman, the evening before the eventful day, had gone through the kennels, made his draft for the following morning, looked to the stables, and given orders about the horses and other little matters pertaining to his craft.

He was seated by his cosy fire, and in a cosy arm-chair, puffing meditatively at a churchwarden, and now and then taking a sip from a glass of hot gin-and-water that stood at his elbow. "Bell's Life" was at his feet, and before the fire lay a couple of varmint-looking fox-terriers. Slowman was thoroughly enjoying himself, and wondering if the six-acred oak spinny which they were to draw first the next morning would hold a good stout fox.

"John," said his wife, bustling into the room, "Captain Martaingail wishes to know if he can see you an instant: he is on his horse at the door."

"Lord bless me, Mary! surely," sticking his feet into his slippers and rushing to the front door. The Captain was a favourite of his. The gin he was drinking was a present to him from the Captain;

the "Bell's Life" was the Captain's. The Captain always came of a Sunday for a chat and look through the kennels; and the Captain was one of the very few of the hunt who could ride. He always gave Slowman a fiver at the end of the season, and many good tips besides; so he was a prime favourite with the huntsman.

"Good evening, good evening, Captain," said Slowman, going to the door. "Come in, sir. Here, Thumas—Bill—Jim—some of you come here and take the Captain's horse. Throw a couple of rugs over him and put him in the four-stall stable, take his bridle off, and give him a feed of corn."

"Now, sir, come in," as the Captain descended from his hack and gave it to one of the lads. "I was just having a smoke, sir, and a glass of gin-and-water—your gin, sir; and good it is, too."

"That's right, Slowman. And I don't care if I take one with you. It's devilish cold, but no frost. I want to have a talk with you about to-morrow."

Taking the arm-chair, he mixed himself a glass of liquor, and lit a cigar.

"Slowman," he commenced, "there's the devil's own lot of people coming to-morrow. There's Jack Spraggon, from Lord Scamperdale's hunt. He's sent on Daddy Longlegs, his Lordship's best horse, and another; so *he* means going. Jealous devil he is,

too. Soapy Sponge will be here with Hercules and Multum in Parvo; old Jawleyford, and a host of others of that lot. Then there's Lord Wildrace, Sir Harry Clearall, and God knows who besides. There's more than forty horses in Craneford now—every stall and stable engaged; and there will be twice as many in the morning.

“Ah! sir, it's the breakfast as brings 'em—at least, a great many of 'em.”

“Well, I daresay that has something to do with it,” replied the Captain; “but a great many come to have a laugh at us. The fact is, most of our men can't ride a d——. Then look at Head and Over, they are always coming to grief and falling off. No wonder they get laughed at. And most of the others, too. There will be no end of ladies out, too, and all to have a grin at us. Oh! by-the-way, Slowman, here is your tip. I may just as well give it to you to-night as later. I've made it ten instead of five this year, because you've shewn us such prime sport.”

“Very much obliged to you, Captain, indeed,” thrusting the note into his pocket; “and for your kind opinion too. I try to show what sport I can, and always will. So they're coming to have a laugh at us, are they! I wish we may find a good stout fox, and choke all the jealous beggars off.

I'd give this ten-pund note to do it," slapping his pocket.

"It may be done, Slowman," replied the Captain cautiously; "in fact, I may say I have done it. But you must back me up; and, mind, never a word."

"I'm mum, sir. Mum as a gravestone."

"Well, you see, Slowman, having found out what they are coming for, I've a pill for them. You draw the six-acre oak spinny first. Well, there will be a *drag* from that over the stiffest country to Bolton Mill. That's eight miles as the crow flies. There, under the lee of a hedge, will be old Towler with a fresh-caught fox from their own country. As he hears the hounds coming up he will let him loose. He's not one of your three-legged ones, but a fresh one, caught only this afternoon. I've seen him—such a trimmer! He'll lead them straight away for their own country. And if the strangers, and old Spraggon, and Jawleyford, and all the rest of them can see it through, they are better men than I take them to be. I shall have my second horse ready for me at the mill. And so had you better. I'll take the conceit out of the beggars."

"By the living Harry!" exclaimed the huntsman, "a grand idea. I must draft Conqueror,

Madcap, and Rasselas. They are dead on drags. But, captain, if the governors twig it?"

"Not a bit, Slowman. They, as you know, won't go four miles."

"Yes, sir, yes. I know all that. But if they should twig? They have the coin, you know." The huntsman had his eye to the main chance.

"But they will not, Slowman. Now, I will tell you a secret; but, mind, it's between ourselves. Honour, you know."

"Honour bright, Captain," replied the huntsman, laying his hand on his heart.

"Well, then, to-morrow at breakfast, Head and Over will announce their intention of resigning."

"No, sir; you don't mean it?" said the huntsman hastily.

"I do," replied the Captain, "And I am going to take them on, and you too. I am to be your M.F.H. It's all cut and dried. So you see you should run no risk. But not a word of this."

The huntsman sat with his mouth open, and at last uttered, "Dash my boots and tops, Captain, but you are a trimmer! But," he continued, "if we find a fox before we come on the drag?"

"But you will not, Slowman. The cover is mine, and has been well hunted through to-day,

and will be to-morrow morning again. No fox will be found there."

The two sat for an hour and more talking and arranging matters, so that there might be no failure on the morrow. And all having been satisfactorily arranged, the Captain mounted his horse and rode home.

The following morning—the last of the season—was all that could be desired. A grey day with a southerly breeze. It was mild for the time of year. Great were the preparations at Mr Head's house. He gave the breakfast one year, Over the next. It was turn and turn about.

As it was the last breakfast he was to give as an M.F.H., Head determined it should be a good one. Mrs Head was great before her massive silver tea set; and she had her daughter on her right to assist her.

At the time appointed Lord Wildrace, who had driven over in his mail phaeton, put in an appearance in his No. 1 pink, closely followed by Spraggon, who determined to have ample time for his breakfast. Then old Jawleyford entered, and rushing up to the lady, declared it was too bad of her not to have come over and seen them. At any rate, they would come and spend a week with them soon at Jawleyford Court, would they not? Then

Soapy Sponge turned up, looking as smart and spruce as ever.

We cannot go through the breakfast—or the speech of Mr Head, and the other by Mr Over, or the regrets of the company on their resigning the joint mastership, or the cheers on the announcement that Captain Martaingail had consented to keep them on.

“Devilish good feed,” growled Jack Spraggon to Sponge, who was drawing on his buckskin gloves. Jack was a little elevated; for he had not spared the cherry-brandy or the milk punch.

“It was that,” replied his friend. “Feel as if you could ride this morning, don’t you?”

“Yes, I can—always do; but no chance of it with such dogs as these.”

“Don’t know about that,” returned Sponge. “They generally find, and kill too.”

Such a field had been rarely seen with the Sternum hounds—horsemen, carriages, mounted ladies, all eager.

“Let the whips be with you, or rather at the outside of the cover, to keep the people back,” whispered Captain Martaingail to the huntsman. “I will go to the top of the cover when I give the view halloa. You know what to do.”

“Certain of a fox, I suppose, Martaingail?”

asked Lord Wildrace, as they were smoking their cigars close to the hounds, who were drawn up on a bit of greensward, giving the ten minutes' law for the late comers.

"It has never yet been drawn blank," returned the Captain. "Ah! there goes Slowman with the hounds. Time's up."

Cigar ends were now thrown away, girths tightened, stirrup-leathers shortened or let down.

The Captain stole into cover, and then galloped away to the far end.

Presently a ringing tally-ho was heard.

"Found quickly," growled Jack Spraggon, as he hustled along on Daddy Longlegs to get a good place.

"That's your sort, old cock!" ejaculated Sponge, as he dashed past him on Hercules, throwing a lot of mud on Jack's spectacles from his horse's hoofs.

"Oh, you unrighteous snob!—you rusty-booted Cockney!" exclaimed Spraggon, rubbing at his spectacles with the back of his gloved hand, thereby daubing the mud all over the glasses, and making it worse. "Just like you, you docked-tail humbug!"

Too-too went Slowman's horn. "Give 'em time, gentlemen—give 'em time!" he screamed, as he took the wattled fence from the spinny into the fallow

beyond. The hounds took up the drag at once, and raced away.

"Yonder he goes!" exclaimed the captain, pointing with his whip to some imaginary object, and, digging the latchfords into his horse, was away.

The first fence was a flight of sheep-hurdles, stretching the whole way across a large turnip field. Here Jawleyford on his old cob came to grief, being sent flying right through his ears.

"Sarve you right!" muttered Spraggon, as Daddy Longlegs took it in his stride. "You would not do a bit of paper for me last week. May you lie there for a month!"

"Pick up the bits," roared Sponge to him as he galloped past, "and lay in a fresh stock of that famous port of yours."

But the hounds were carrying too good a head for much chaff. The gentlemen of the Sternum hunt were riding like mad. Already horses began to sob; for the pace was a rattler, and the country heavy. The celebrated Rushpool brook was before them—that brook that so many have plumbed the depth of. It wants a deal of doing.

Lord Wildrace charged it, so did Spraggon; but both were in. Sponge, on Hercules flew over. Slowman and the Captain did it a little lower

down. Head, Over, and a host of others galloped for a ford half a mile away.

Out of a large field only eight or ten cleared the Rushpool brook. His lordship and Spraggon were soon out and going; and their horses having a fine turn of speed enabled them to come up with the hounds again; and their checking for a few minutes, in consequence of some sheep having stained the ground, let up the rest of the field on their now nearly beaten horses.

“Fastish thing, my Lord, is it not?” said Over to Lord Wildrace, who was mopping his head with a scarlet silk pocket-handkerchief.

“Yes,” said the nobleman, turning his horse’s head to the wind, “devilish sharp. I’m cold, too. I wish I could see my second horse. I’m pumped out.”

“Have a nip of brandy, Wildrace,” said Captain Martaingail, offering his silver flask. “Been in the water, I see—and a good many more, too,” casting his eyes on half a score of dripping objects. “It’s a very distressing jump to a horse, is that Rushpool brook. By gad, they have hit off again!”

Slowman knew well the line to cast his hounds, and they soon hit it off, and went racing away again, heads up and sterns down.

At last Bolton Mill was in sight, and here many

got their second horses, the head grooms from the other hunt having followed the Captain's, and the joint masters' servants were there already.

Spraggon was quickly on the back of The Dandy; but he was hardly up before a view halloo was given in a field below them, and a hat held up proclaimed their fox was ahead of them.

"It's all right, Slowman," said Captain Martingail, as the hounds feathered on the line and took it up.

"He's right away across the Tornops," shouted a keeper-looking man (this was Towler, who had shaken the fox out) as the field came up, "an' a-going like blue murder."

The hunting was now not quite so fast, but they got on better terms with their fox after a little, and settled well to him.

A good stout fox he was too, and deserved a better fate. He led them right into his own country, but before he could reach a friendly earth, seven or eight miles from where he was shook out, the hounds ran into him in the open.

Some eight or ten of the field were in at the finish, and others came up at intervals.

"Here, gentlemen," exclaimed Slowman triumphantly, to the strangers from a distance, "this is one of your foxes. I guess we sent him back to you

faster a precious deal than ever you sent him to us. Sorry we've killed him, though, your dogs want blood, poor things. You've seen what the Sternum hounds can do now! we're not to be laughed at, are we?"

This impudent speech had not much effect generally, but several gentlemen turned away disgusted.

The run was quoted in every sporting paper; and it was years and years before people forgot the great Rushpool Brook run, the last of the season.

The hounds had achieved a reputation, and Captain Martaingail took care they should not lose it. He carried the horn himself after he took to them, Slowman acting as first whip; he drafted most of the hounds, and got together a fresh pack, that were not only good-looking, but could go too. But the dogs never lost the name of the "*Sternum-supercaput*" hounds.

Whilst I am on the subject of hunting, I may as well tell you a funny story which happened to a friend of mine; this took place near London, and although I did not come so badly off as my friend, yet I was nowhere at the finish.

It is of a thorough cockney that I am about to write; of one who made the City his home; did a little in Stocks and on 'Change: he had done so

well on it that he had four hunters standing not a hundred miles from the Angel at Islington. Thither he used to go of an evening on the 'bus to his snug little chambers, to which was attached a capital stable with four loose boxes, and in these four boxes stood four decentish nags. I don't know that they were reliable fencers, but they could gallop; they were bang up to the mark—well done, well groomed, and well clothed.

Frank Cropper was proud of his horses, and his stud-groom, Dick, was his right hand in all matters. Dick, though he professed to have a profound knowledge of horses, in reality knew nothing about them, and had to thank his strappers for the condition and fettle they were in.

But Dick was great at getting up leathers and top boots, was extremely fond of dress, turned out well, and though he could not ride a yard, led every one to believe he was invincible in the saddle.

He was grand when he used to dodge about in the lanes after the Puddleton currant-jelly dogs, riding his master's second horse. Cropper thought it the correct thing to have out a second horse with the harriers. No one ever saw Cropper or his man take a fence; they used to gallop through places or fences that had been smashed by some one before them, or creep through gaps made in hedges.

Occasionally he used to honour the Queen's with his presence; there he did it in grand style, sent his horses down by rail, or drove down in his cart, with his brown-holland overalls on, covering his boots and spotless buckskins from the smallest particle of dust or dirt; the overalls he would have taken off with a grand flourish just before the hounds moved away, and mounted his horse with the grandest possible air, telling Dick to ride to points, and to be sure to be handy with his second horse; but, somehow or other, he never got his second horse; Dick always mistook the line of country.

Once or twice Cropper had been known to grace the Epping Forest Hunt on an Easter Monday; but, somehow or other, Frank did not speak much of this: why, I know not.

"Dick," said his master one morning as he sat at breakfast, "the day after to-morrow is the last of the season—at least, the last day of any hounds I can get to; so I mean to have a turn with the —— staghounds."

"Do you, sir? I wouldn't if I were you, sir; hate that calf-hunting. The Queen's ain't up to my ideas of huntin'; no staghounds are; but these hounds are duffers; the master's a duffer, the huntsman is a duffer, the whips are duffers,

and so are the hounds. No, sir, be Cardinal Wiseman, and go with the —— pack.”

“No, Dick, I have made up my mind to see these hounds; it’s a certain find; open the door of the cart and out pops your stag. It’s the last day of the season, and I mean to have a good gallop.”

“Very well, sir. You will go down by rail, I suppose?”

“Yes, Dick, yes; by rail. You will go on by the eight o’clock train. I shall follow by the ten.”

“All right, sir.” And they separated, the man to look to his stable and things, the master to do a little on ’Change.

Frank Cropper went in for a good breakfast on the morning of the last of the season, took plenty of jumping powder in the shape of Kentish cherry brandy, and topped it up with some curaoa.

“I feel,” says Cropper, as he got into the train, and was talking to some City friends who were bound on the same errand as myself; “I feel, my boys, that I shall take the lead to-day, and keep it, too. Ha, ha! What do you think of that? A church would not stop me. Temple Bar I should take in my stride, if my horse could jump it. I’m chockful of go this morning; I shall distinguish myself.”

“Or extinguish yourself,” remarked one.

Cigars and an occasional nip at their pocket pistols whiled away the time till the train arrived at its destination; there, Cropper and another took a fly, and drove the three miles they had to go. They were quite determined they would not dirt their boots or spotless leathers by a three miles' ride; they would appear at the meet as bright as their No. 1 pinks, Day & Martin, and Probert's paste could make them.

“There they are!” exclaimed Cropper's friend, as he caught sight of the hounds drawn up on a small common. “By Jupiter, but there's a lot out! it's the last day of the season.”

Cropper descended from the fly in all the glories of his ulster coat and overalls; his horses were there under the charge of spicy-looking Master Dick.

The overalls were slipped off, and, with the ulster, consigned to the driver to leave at the station; and our hero mounted his horse and was ready for the fray.

Now, this meet not being far from town, and a large number of the London division being present, the worthy master, having a proper regard for his hounds, thought a few jumps might choke off a good many who would press upon the hounds. So

he had the deer uncarterd some three-quarters of a mile from where they were, the van containing him was backed not very far from a flight of sheep-hurdles, and a double line of foot people being formed, the door of the cart opened and out leapt the stag. Looking around him for an instant, he started away at a quick trot, and then, as the shouting became louder, commenced to canter, cleared the hurdles, and was away.

"Lot of these London cads down here to-day," remarked young Lord Reckless to his friend Sir Henry Careful. "Don't know, 'pon my soul, what they come here for."

"For about the same reason you do—to see the hounds, and get a fall or two."

"Ah, that's all very fine," retorted his Lordship, "for you to say so. You never ride at anything, therefore you are pretty safe. I ride at everything."

"But never by any chance get over," interrupted the baronet, "except through your horse's ears."

What more they said was cut short by the hounds coming up on the line of the stag, and racing away.

I got over the hurdles all right, and so did most of the field; but at the second fence I was down. And I saw Cropper unseated at the same instant,

and his horse galloping wildly away at the third fence. Dick was shot through his horse's ears into the next field.

I was rushing about for mine, over my ankles in mud, when I encountered Frank Cropper and his man Dick in the middle of the slough.

"Where the deuce is my second horse?" roared Cropper to his servant. "I thought I told you to ride him to the points."

"So I was going to, sir; but he stumbled, and unshipped me."

"Good heavens! what is to be done?" exclaimed Cropper. "I shall lose the run. Here, you fellows," to a lot of countrymen about, "catch the horses—half-a-crown each for them."

But the nags were not so easily caught, and it was half an hour before they were secured. Both I and Cropper were wet and cold; so, leaving Dick to go on with the horses by train to London, and get the coats at the station, Cropper and I started on foot to walk there. He was too bruised and cold to ride; so was I.

You may suppose that the remarks we heard going along were not complimentary: "Two gents in scarlet as has been throwed from their 'orses, and a-stumping of it home," etc.

At last I was getting nearly beat, and so was my

friend, when we espied a fly coming along the road. In it was seated Warner of the Welsh Harp at Hendon. Taking pity on us, he gave us a lift, and drove us to the nearest station, and we reached London in due time.

This was the last of my hunting experiences. I got disgusted with it, and sold my horses. Having read flaming accounts from Cook's tourists, some of whom had been round the world in ninety days, I packed up my guns and some clothes, and started for America.

I did not remain long in New York, as I was anxious to commence shooting. So I was not long in getting to the small town of ——, and, putting up at the best hotel the place afforded, which was not a very good one, sent for the landlord.

"Wall, Britisher, I'm glad to see yeu," commenced the American Boniface, coolly seating himself on the table, and commencing spitting at a bluebottle fly on the floor. "So yeu've come here to see our glorious American Constitootion. Wall, I guess yeu'll be pretty considerable surprised—tarnation surprised, doggoned if you won't. We're an almighty nation, we air. Going a-shooting, air yeu? Wall, I calkerlate we've got more game hereabouts than would fill all London, and enough ships in our little river the Mississi-pi to tow your

little island across the broad Atlantic—we hev, indeed, stranger. There’s lots of grouse; but nary a buffeler, bar, nor alligater about here. But I s’pose yeu means to take up yer fixins here in this feather-bed bully hotel afore yeu makes tracks?”

I assured him such was my intention.

“Wall, then, stranger, what will yeu like?—cocktail, mint julip, brandy smash, or cobbler? I’ve a few festive cusses in the bar as will tell yeu all about the shooting. Let’s hev a lick-up with them.”

To this I assented, and walked into another room with him, where there were Yankees of all descriptions.

I determined to make myself popular, and stood drinks to any amount.

“Bust my gizzard, but yeu air a ripper!” exclaimed my tall friend. “He air, ain’t he, bully boys?”

“What more they said was drowned in a terrific row which took place at the other end of the apartment.

“Hillo!” shouted my tall friend. “Come on, stranger, if yeu want to see our pertikelur customs of this hemisphere. Bet my boots it’s Bully Larkins and that old ’oss from Calerforney. Go it, my cockeys!” he screamed out as he mounted

on a table, "go it, old coon!" alluding to one of the combatants; "go it! Billy's a-gaining on yeu, and if yeu don't look out he'll riz yer har with his bowie knife, gouge yer eye, and fetch yeu out of yer boots—he will, by——!"

Such a fearful row I never heard. All were in a state of frenzied excitement—knives glittered in the hands of many. Whilst all this was going on I made my way out of the apartment, and locked and bolted myself in my own.

In half an hour my landlord came to the door, and knocked for admission.

"It's all over, stranger," he said as he entered. "Old Calerforney carved two of Bully Larkins' fingers off with his bowie, and Larkins bit off half t'other's nose. I guess he ain't beautiful. They're festive cusses here, and air always at it. Nary a day passes without a free fight."

I need hardly say the next day I took my departure for New York, and was off to England by the first boat. I had had quite enough of my American friends and their notions.

I have given up sporting, as I found I could make no hand at it. I shoot occasionally for amusement, and fish occasionally, but never lay down the law as an authority.

MY FIRST DAY'S FOX-HUNTING

BUT that was six or seven years ago, and I frankly admit that then I was a very indifferent horseman, although I was in happy ignorance of the fact—in its integrity. I was quite conscious that I did not ride very gracefully or over-comfortably, but I always discovered that the fault was my horse's and not mine. My cousins used to think otherwise, and I have spent hours at a time in trying to induce them to give up their opinions on the subject and to adopt mine. I should explain that my cousins being orphans, and my father being their guardian, they lived with us as part of our family, and that whenever they rode out they seemed to think they had a right to insist upon my accompanying them. I at length got tired of riding out with my fair cousins, and of hearing them titter as, at their suggestion, we went down steep hills at full trot (I confess I was never great at trotting down hill), and so I resolved to take to *hunting*. I had heard that some horses, though the worst of hacks, made the best of hunters; and

I thought that something of that kind might apply to horsemen also, and that I myself might shine more in the field than I did on the road. It was the end of February, and the Coverbury pack were meeting three times a week at places within easy reach of the Stonington Station. That was jolly ! I could buy a hunter, keep him at Philley's livery-stables, and on hunting-days send him by train to Stonington, meet him, have a day's hunting unknown to my cousins, and thus enjoy myself with perfect freedom. I at once drew a cheque for £50, with which I determined to buy the best hunter in all Blankshire ! I called at Philley's and told him of my intention, and asked him how much a week he would require to "board and lodge" my steed when purchased. The man smiled---he seemed to have a habit of smiling ; but seeing from the seriousness of my manner that I was in earnest, he replied that his charge for keeping the horse would be thirty shillings a week ; and he added that if I wished to buy a "slapping" hunter he'd got just the horse for my money. "Of course," said he, "you don't want a pony, but a good tall horse as'll keep you out of the dirt ; and," he added, scanning my figure from top to toe, "you don't want no cart-horse to carry your weight neither." I admitted that my ideas on the sub-

ject coincided with his exactly, and he at once called to a stable-boy to bring out Iron Duke.

"There," said Philley, as the horse was trotted into the yard, "you might go a day's march and not come across such a hunter as that—extraordinary animal, I assure you, sir." Not understanding the points of a horse, I deemed it prudent to indorse all that Iron Duke's owner chose to say in his praise; and I was thus compelled to acknowledge that his superior height (over sixteen hands), long legs, and slender build, gave him an advantage over every other horse I had seen in my life, as regards carrying a light-weight over a high-stone-wall country.

As we stood discussing the merits of the horse I happened to turn round, and there I saw the stable-boy grinning and "tipping the wink" to a companion. This aroused my suspicions that all mightn't be right; so instead of at once buying and paying for the horse, I mustered up courage to say, "Well, Mr Philley, I like the horse's appearance, but are his paces as good as his looks? Will you let me try him with the Coverbury pack to-morrow?" Mr Philley paused, thought a few moments, and then observed somewhat solemnly, "Iron Duke, you see, sir, is a very valuable horse, dirt cheap at fifty pounds; in fact,

it's giving him away, it is really, and I shouldn't like anything to happen to a horse like that whilst he's mine. We don't generally let him out for hunting; he's too good for most of our customers. But I'll tell yer what we'll do; we'll let you have him to-morrow for two guineas, and then (if you have no accident with him, as of course a gentleman like you won't) you can please yourself whether you have him or not. But if you *should* have an accident—of course accidents *will* happen sometimes—why, then the horse will be yours and the fifty pounds mine." These terms seemed fair, and I accepted them, though not before they had banished my suspicions, and almost induced me to buy and pay for the horse there and then.

In the morning I called at Philley's for my hunter, and the boy brought him out bridled and saddled. As he stood straight in front of me his tall slim-built figure looked as sharp as a knife. I ventured to express this idea, but being doubtful as to whether sharpness was a good point or a bad one, I did so in a manner which might be taken as in earnest or in jest. The dealer chose to take it in the latter sense, and after laughing heartily at my "good joke," assured me that I should find my horse "as clever as a cat." I then attempted to mount, and after some time (during which the

ostler gave me a "leg up" *and over the other side*) I was successful. The stirrup-straps having been adjusted, I set out for the station; and in my journey thither I was conscious that the commanding presence of my horse and the easy graceful attitude of his rider were fully appreciated by the numerous passers-by who stopped to stare at us—doubtless in admiration. One thing, though, nettled me a bit. Just as I got opposite the club, and was waving my whip to Fitz-Jones, De Brown, and some other fellows who were standing in the portico, my horse shied at a wheelbarrow, and I had some difficulty in getting comfortable in the saddle again. I gently remonstrated with the boy who was wheeling the barrow for not getting out of my way, when the impudent little scoundrel turned round and shouted, "Oh, crikey! yer ain't very safe up there! Get inside; safer inside!" Whereupon the whole of the bystanders, including my friends of the club, burst out laughing. I, of course, could not descend from my high horse to chastise the young urchin, and as I couldn't think of anything smart to say to him, I treated him with the silent contempt he deserved, and rode on. But still, as I said before, this nettled me.

With the exception of this trifling *contretemps*, I arrived safely at Stonington Wood, the place ap-

pointed for the meet. There was a good muster of ladies and gentlemen on horseback (some ten or fourteen of the gentlemen in scarlet coats), and a condescending old gentleman with grey hair, neatly trimmed whiskers, and rosy cheeks, remarked that there was a "good field," but I couldn't see it. All that I could see in the shape of a field was a small patch of turnips enclosed with a stone wall, the remainder of the surrounding country being common and wood, or, as I afterwards learned to call it, "cover." I soon began to appreciate my Iron Duke, for I found that he was the tallest horse there, and his legs seemed as light as an antelope's in comparison with the legs of the other animals, some of which seemed almost as heavy as cart-horses'.

The clock of the village church struck eleven, and three or four of the men in scarlet began to whip the dogs to make them go into the wood. I thought it was the proper thing to imitate their example, and seeing one of the dogs scrambling up the wall I instantly rode up and gave him what I thought a "lift up behind" with my whip. To my astonishment the animal, instead of going over into the wood, tumbled down at my feet and yelped most piteously. Iron Duke, not liking the noise, turned round suddenly and kicked out, and the hound had an almost miraculous escape of having

his skull cracked. All this happened in less than a minute, and seemed to cause a "great sensation," for two or three of the roughest of the men in scarlet were instantly attacked with a fit of cursing and swearing, of which I took no notice, believing it to be lavished on the head of the unfortunate hound. But I soon had my doubts; for one of the gentlemen in scarlet rode up to me, and with much severity informed me that he could not have *his* hounds "served in that way." I protested that it was an accident, and that I thought "there could be no harm in doing what the others did." With this explanation he seemed quite satisfied, for he at once left me, and even smiled as he did so. The dog must have been a young one, for as I passed two gentlemen who were doubtless discussing puppies in general, and I suppose him in particular, I overheard one of them say, "He's evidently green." The dogs having got safely into cover, the ladies and gentlemen began to ride along the outside of the wood—cover, I mean—and I did the same, taking care, though, to keep well in the rear, that I might see what the others did. I kept clear of every one I could possibly avoid, as I found that the people who hunted at Stonington indulged in a peculiar kind of slang which I could not well understand. I had not gone far before I

heard a loud laughing in my rear. I seemed to be familiar with the sound. I turned "about" in the saddle, and who should I see but my cousins, not twenty yards behind me! I was inclined to go home, and I should have done so only I saw that my cousins, besides being attended by Evans in livery, were accompanied by their old schoolfellow, Miss Trafford, a young lady to whom I had been introduced at our last county ball. To enjoy her presence I determined to brave all. I turned my horse round and raised my hat as much as the tight guard would let me, and in another moment I was at the mercy of my tormentors. "Ha! ha! ha!" laughed my cousin Emily; "we saw you stealing out of the garden gate at six o'clock this morning." "Yes," chimed in Julia, "and with those splendid top-boots on! You thought to avoid us, did you?" "I say, Adolphus," continued Emily, "when you hire a horse-box again, and don't want anyone to know, don't let your name and destination be labelled on it like an advertisement! Ha! ha! ha!" I was completely sold, and I was obliged to acknowledge it; and when I heard that my cousins had actually ridden ten miles to the meet, whilst I had come by train, I felt that I must do something to retrieve my reputation in the eyes of Miss Trafford.

The cover was a very large one, and whilst we had been talking all the people had disappeared. I told the ladies where the dogs were; and Emily at once came to the conclusion that, if we went round the other way, which was shorter, we should meet the "field" at "Keeper's Clump." Acting on this suggestion, we turned back and cantered round to the other side of the cover. As we did so I felt that field-riding was my *forte*; it was so much more comfortable than hard road-riding, and I at once resolved to make hunting my study and only amusement. My cousins continued to tease me as we went along; but to my delight Miss Trafford sided with me, thus giving me confirmation of the hope I had cherished at the ball, that she was not indifferent to the attentions I then paid her, slight as those attentions necessarily were.

Our passage of arms was suspended by our arrival at the far end of the cover, where the field were awaiting, as I was informed, the decision of the master as to what cover to "draw" next. I wondered whether they had any artists with them, and what good could come of *drawing* a cover with which nearly every one seemed familiar. But this is parenthetical. A stone wall, about four feet high, separated us from the rest of the field.

"What have you lost?" said Emily to me, as my eyes wandered up and down the wall.

"Nothing," I replied; "I am looking for the gate."

"Then you are looking for something you won't find this side a mile and a half; that's the road—over the wall. Come! give us a lead."

Here was a pretty state of things! I, who had never in my life been over anything higher than a mushroom or wider than a gutter, and who had in my charge three ladies, suddenly required to give them a lead over a four-feet wall, in presence of the whole field! The perspiration stood in great drops on my brow, and I would have given any amount if I could but have sunk into my boots. But I couldn't; and all eyes being on me (including *her's*) I had no time to say my prayers. I had to choose at once between disgrace and the chance of being "sent to my account with all my imperfections on my head." One glance at Miss Trafford decided me; and I put my horse's head towards the wall and then my spurs into his sides. When I was within three feet my courage failed me, and I pulled up; but it was *too late*. Iron Duke had already risen; and in doing so had nearly rolled me off, first over the cantle and then the pommel. Ten thousand years rolled over my devoted head in

these few moments, and then all was still—*i.e.*, as regards motion; but my ears were assailed by a deafening cheer—mixed, I must candidly admit, with some laughter. When I “came to,” I discovered that I was still alive, and still in the saddle, and that my horse was, in the most matter-of-fact way possible, spanning the wall like a bridge, fore-legs on one side, hind-legs on the other. I hastily congratulated myself that things were no worse, and then began to consider what was the proper step to be taken by a man in my situation. “Pull him back!” “Job him over!” “Stick to him!” “Get off!” and similar advice came to me from every quarter. I resolved to act on the “get off” principle; and with some difficulty I *did* get off, taking care to be on the right side. I then endeavoured to pull the horse over with the reins; but he resisted with all the obstinacy of a costermonger’s donkey—which circumstance seemed to add to the amusement of the field, for their laughter increased. Growing desperate, I slashed my whip several times over the animal’s neck; at which treatment he kicked and plunged until, to my great delight, he kicked the wall down!

“Thank you for your easy lead, my dear cousin Adolphus!” said Emily, as she and the two other ladies came through the breach in the wall.

"You're quite welcome," I was about to reply, when I was interrupted by a coarse-looking lad, whose spindle-like legs were covered with breeches and gaiters.

"I say, guv'nur," said he, "you rode your horse over that there wall about as well as I'd a-rode my mother's clothes-horse over!—do it again, do!"

The ladies could not refrain from laughter, in which I made a miserable attempt at joining them; and then I tried to remount. But this was a difficult task; for my legs were short, my horse's were long, and his recent adventure had made him fidgety, and I was at last reduced to the necessity of accepting an offer from the lad with the spindle legs to give me a "leg-up." With his assistance (for which I gave him sixpence, and I have no doubt he threw his bad joke into the bargain) I managed to scramble into the saddle again. As we rode to the next cover I felt exceedingly sheepish, and the unfeeling laughter of my cousins, added to the now cool manner of Miss Trafford, and the quiet grimaces of old Evans, the groom (who of course kept pretty close to us), made me desperate, and I was determined to do something to recover my lost prestige, even if the next day's *Times* had to record a "Fatal accident in the hunting-field at Stonington." Emily

asked me tauntingly whether I had "done leaping for to-day?"

"Not exactly," I replied; "I intend——"

"Will you take a lead from me?" she interrupted.

"I'll take any lead that *you* dare give me," I replied haughtily.

"Done!"

And she had no sooner said the word than the fox broke from the cover, about two hundred yards in front of us, followed in a few moments by the hounds, so close together that (as I afterwards heard one gentleman remark to another) you might have covered them with a blanket. Away they went, and away went we after them. My enthusiasm was raised to the utmost pitch, and I was determined to stop at nothing. Emily and Julia kept on my left, a few yards in advance, whilst Miss Trafford, on my right, kept about the same distance in my rear. The fox, luckily, had taken the open, and the ladies prophesied a half-hour's run with no checks. But before ten minutes of it were over, I perceived, about a hundred yards in front of us, a thick, well-laid quickset hedge, about four feet high, and as we neared it I thought I saw water glistening on the other side. There was no escape; my time had come; I was led in front, and driven in rear; and leap I must.

"Now for your lead!" cried Emily, waving her whip in the air as she cleared the fence and the brook beyond it. My horse followed bravely—and so should I, if I hadn't, by some unfortunate mishap or other, rolled out of the saddle, and in the midst of my victory fallen into the brook! As I lay sprawling on my back, and before I had time to think where I was, I saw the belly of Miss Trafford's horse as he carried her over the fence, the brook, and me!

"Stop my horse! stop my horse!" I roared, as I came dripping wet out of the brook. "Stop my horse!" But I earnestly hoped that no one would stop him, for this last *contretemps* had considerably damped my ardour and cooled my courage; and I thought that if nobody *did* "stop my horse," he would eventually find his way to the pound; and his absence would afford me a decent pretext for going home. To my horror, though, Iron Duke was brought back by the wretched lad of the spindle legs. "Be the saddle greased, sir?" said he, wiping it with his nasty dirty pocket handkerchief. I could have kicked him, and should have done so, only I thought he might have kicked back, and so I swallowed his affront, and actually gave him another sixpence. Having learned from him the road to the station, I was just stealing off when I heard in my

rear the cry of "Tally-ho back!" The fox had come back—doubled, I mean—and I was forced to join the others and run after him again. But, fortunately for me, he did not run far before the dogs caught him and killed him, and then one of the men in scarlet cut off his nice long tail and gave it to Emily. She actually accepted it, although I am nearly sure she had never seen the man before in her life! I thought young ladies ought to accept presents from no gentlemen but their relatives and accepted suitors; and, besides, I don't believe that this man *was* a gentleman, for when I whipped the hound to make him get over the wall (which, as I have before stated, he most unreasonably declined to do), this fellow was the loudest in his oaths and curses, which he showered broadcast on the hound, or my horse, or something—I have never ascertained what—and in the presence of ladies! Emily said something about making a hair-brush of the fox's tail (what an absurd idea! but she always was queer); and as the man cut off the fox's head, she gave me to understand that that would be mine if I asked for it. I *did* ask for it; but for some unaccountable reason or other, I *didn't get it*. The remainder of the poor fox was thrown to the dogs, who soon tore him to pieces and ate him. It occurred to my philosophic mind, as I witnessed

this spectacle, that the fox, like me, was a hero ; but, also like me, an unsuccessful one. What a number of men, women, horses, and dogs to conquer one little fox ! These and similar reflections were soon cut short, for the dogs having finished their lunch, the men and women began to think about theirs ; in fact, Sir John Hausie had invited them all, including me, to lunch with him at the Manor House, about half a mile distant. As we journeyed thither I began to feel very uncomfortable, for my coat, waistcoat, and shirt, although not dirty (for the water in the brook was clean), were wet through, and, the warmth of exercise and enthusiasm having subsided, I felt very cold. When we arrived at Sir John's, I was so stiff with cold that I could scarcely dismount, which Sir John observing, he came and very kindly accosted me. He also inquired as to the cause of my fall—spill, he called it—and offered me the loan of a coat whilst mine was hastily dried at the kitchen fire. Sir John was an exceedingly pleasant man, and had a jolly, cheerful, laughing face, and we soon understood each other. I accepted his proffered loan with many thanks, and then took Miss Trafford in to lunch. As I sat by her side in the baronet's coat, and gracefully helped her to sherry, the frost of her manner gradually thawed ; and when we returned to remount we were

as jolly as toppers—sand-boys, I mean. I of course assisted her to get into the saddle ; but I was so stiff and so giddy (from the excitement of the morning) that I very nearly let her down. We were some time without finding another fox ; and as my cousins had gone off with old Evans and Captain De la Grace, and as Miss Trafford seemed so amiable, I determined to improve the occasion. We were on the common just outside Sir John's park, the beauties of which I was very particular in admiring ; and having thus got Miss Trafford to lag behind, I took the opportunity of unbosoming my heart to her. I got very excited, and my voice trembled with emotion (or something of that sort), as I made her a pathetic offer of my heart and hand. I paused (as well as my excitement would allow me, for it had brought on the hiccups), and she replied. I can't remember exactly what she said, but it was something about sparing me the pain of a refusal, and about not marrying a man who couldn't take a fence. I offered to jump the park wall if she would only listen to my suit. She agreed ; and bracing up all my spirits, I rode full tilt at the wall ; and over I went, leaving my horse on the wrong side ! And as I turned an involuntary somersault I thought I heard sounds like “the receding footsteps of a cantering horse.” (*Note.*—This is a

quotation from some lines I afterwards wrote to Miss Trafford.) There was then a slight break in the thread of my thoughts, and after that I found myself lying in the midst of some young fir-trees, whilst Iron Duke was quietly browsing on the leafless twigs of a tree on the other side of the wall. Gentle reader ! I am sure you must feel for my unfortunate position. I will not torture you further by relating the painful particulars of how I scrambled over the wall ; how I got on Iron Duke, only to tumble off again ; how I nearly broke my neck before I got home ; how Philley declared I had broken the horse's knees ; how he made me pay £50 for the animal ; how I sold him the next week for £10 (less £2 for carriage) ; and, worst of all, how Miss Trafford jilted me, and my cousins—cruel girls—laughed at my misfortunes and made sport of my troubles. Indeed, with all these we have nothing to do, for they happened after “ My First Day's Fox-hunting.”

MY FIRST AND LAST STEEPLE-CHASE

IN the year 1859, the Irish militia regiment in which I had the honour to hold a commission was disembodied ; but, as a reward for our distinguished services at Portsmouth, where we mounted guard daily on the dockyards for more than twelve months, each subaltern was presented with a gratuity of six months' pay—a boon that must have been highly appreciated at the time by our much - enduring and long - suffering tailors, into whose pockets most of the money, in the end, found its way.

Dick Maunsel, the senior lieutenant, and myself were cousins, and (as the old chief never lost a chance of telling us when we got into trouble) “always hunted in couples.” Our fathers' allowance had been liberal. We were free from debt—that “Old Man of the Sea,” which too often hangs like a millstone about the British subaltern's neck—and, finding ourselves at liberty, as a matter of course determined to go off somewhere and get rid of our pay together. Much beer and tobacco were consumed in the various “corobberys” held to

talk the matter over ; and at length it was decided that we should take a lodge at a small watering-place, well known to both, on the south-west coast of Ireland, and there abide until something better turned up.

I don't think, under the circumstances, we could have made a much better choice. The salmon and sea-fishing were excellent ; when the shooting season came round, most of the moors in the neighbourhood were free to us. The summer had been unusually hot ; we were tired of town life, and longing to divest ourselves of the " war paint," " bury the hatchet," and get away to some quiet bay by the Atlantic, where we could do what seemed right in our own eyes, free from the eternal pipeclay and conventionalities with which we had been hampered. " Last, not least," at a ball given before the regiment left Ireland, we had met two girls, sisters, who usually spent the season there, and, if the truth must be told, I believe they had hit us so hard we were " crippled " from flying very far. So, after an impartial distribution of the regimental plate, and a rather severe night at mess, to finish the remains of the cellar, we bade farewell to our companions in arms, and found ourselves once more in " dear old dirty Dublin," *en route* for the south.

One evening, about six weeks after our arrival at Aunaghmore, we were lying on the cliffs, watching the trawlers as they drifted slowly up with the tide. The day had been dark and misty, with some thunder far out at sea; but it cleared up as the sun went down, and I was pointing out to Dick, who had been unusually silent, the remarkable likeness between the scene before us and one of Turner's best-known pictures, when he interrupted me suddenly, saying—

“I'll tell you a story, Frank. When a boy, I remember starting one morning with poor Ferguson (the owner of Harkaway) to ride one of his horses in a private match. We took a short cut across an old mountain road, and coming out on the brow of the hill which commanded one of the finest views in Ireland, I pulled up my horse to call Ferguson's attention to it. ‘For heaven's sake, sir,’ he said impatiently, ‘think on something that will do you good.’ And just at this moment, old man, I feel half inclined to agree with him. How much money have you left?”

Without speaking, I handed him my purse, the contents of which he counted slowly over, saying, “I think we shall have enough.”

“Enough for what?” I asked.

“For a ball,” he replied coolly. “The people

here have been very civil to us, and we owe them some return. There are plenty of girls in the neighbourhood to make a very good one; men are scarce; but we can ask the "Plungers" over from —— Barracks. Besides, I promised Emily last night, and there's no getting out of it."

I ventured mildly to suggest that the regiment didn't get out of the last under a couple of hundred, and that we had not half that between us.

"My dear fellow," he replied, "this is quite another affair altogether. We can borrow the club archery tent for a ballroom. There are many things, game, &c., to be had for nothing here. My sisters are coming over on a visit; they will look after the details. It will be a great success, and we shall only have wine and lights to pay for."

"And how far," I asked, with a slight sneer, "will the money left go in getting those, not to speak of other essentials that must be provided?"

"I have arranged all that as well," answered Dick, with the air of a man who had thoroughly mastered the subject. "The races here come off the end of August. There is a £50 Plate to be run for on the flat, and a steeple-chase as well. I know all the horses likely to start. With one exception (Father B.'s) ours can give them a stone for either event. The priest can't run his horse;

the new bishop has been down on him. We can send for ours: plenty of time for a rough preparation. Thanks to the hot weather, and that confounded drill, you can still ride eleven stone. There now, what more do you want? Come along to the lodge, and we will talk the matter over comfortably."

I certainly had my misgivings as to the practicability of Dick's scheme, but knew him too long and well to doubt his attempting it at all events. I could, of course, refuse to join, and leave him to his own devices; but we had pulled through too many scrapes together for that. To do him justice, he generally succeeded in whatever he undertook; and whether it was owing to his eloquence, some of his father's old claret, or both combined, before we separated that night I had entered heart and soul into his plans.

We lost no time in commencing our preparations. Within a week the horses had arrived; then Dick's sisters—two fine light-hearted girls, full of fun and mischief—came over. After that there was no rest for me. No unhappy adjutant of a newly-em-bodied militia or volunteer regiment ever had more or a greater variety of work on hand. Sunrise generally found me in the saddle, giving the horses a gallop on the sands—a performance which had

to be repeated twice during the day, Dick's weight, some sixteen stone, preventing him from giving me any assistance. I was overhead in love, besides, and four hours at least had to be devoted to the object of my affections. We kept open house; game and fish had to be provided for the larder, and the girls were always wanting something or other from the neighbouring town, which they declared only I could get; so between all, my time was fully occupied, and seemed to fly.

If Mr Mill's bill for giving ladies the franchise had been in force then, I think Dick and myself would have had a fair chance of representing the county. So soon as our intention to give a race ball was known, we became the most popular men in it. Offers of supplies and assistance came pouring in from all quarters. Plate, china, and glass arrived so fast, and in such quantities, the lodge could not contain them, and we were obliged to pitch the tent. As the time drew near, the preparation and bustle increased tenfold. Our life was one continual picnic. From early morning until late at night, the house was crowded with girls laughing, flirting, trying on ball-dresses, and assisting in the decorating of the tent. We never thought of sitting down to dinner, but took it where, when, and how we could. *Ay de mi!* I

have been in some hospitable houses since, where the owners kept *chefs*, and prided themselves, not unjustly, on the quality of their cellars; but I never enjoyed myself so much, and, I fear, never shall, as those scrambling dinners, though the bill of fare often consisted of cold grouse, washed down by a tankard of beer—taken, too, standing in the corner of a pantry, surrounded by a host of pretty girls, all of them engaged in teasing and administering to my wants.

Early one morning, about a week before the races were to come off, I was engaged as usual, exercising Dick's hunter on the course, when, at a little distance, I saw a horse in body-clothes cantering along with that easy stride peculiar to thorough-breds. For some time the rider appeared anxious to avoid me, increasing the pace as I came near, until the animal I rode, always headstrong, broke away and soon ranged alongside.

"Whose horse is that?" I inquired of the groom.

"My master's, yer honour," he replied, without a smile, slackening his pace at the same time, as mine raced past.

When I succeeded in pulling up again, the fellow was galloping away in another direction. I had seen enough, however: there was no mistaking

those flat sinewy legs. So, setting the horse's head straight for the lodge, I went up to Dick's room. He was in bed, but awake; and though his face slightly lengthened when I told him I was certain the priest's horse had arrived, he answered coolly enough—

“You need not look so serious, Frank; at the worst, it is only a case of selling Madman, and I have had a good offer for him. It is too bad of the priest, though, to spoil our little game. They told me the bishop had sat on him; but of course he will run in another name. I should have known an old fox like that would have more than one earth. He won't be able to go in for the double event, that is certain. His horse can't jump. The steeplechase is ours; so come and have a swim. After breakfast we will see what can be done.”

Unfortunately there was no help for it. The priest's horse had carried off a Queen's Plate at the Curragh, and, safe and well at the post, could win as he pleased. It was too late for us to draw back, however, even if we were disposed that way. The invitations for the ball (which was to come off the night of the races) were out. So, consoling ourselves as well as it was possible under the circumstances, we continued our preparations, looking well

after the horses, determined not to throw away a chance.

Misfortunes seldom come alone. The day before the race, so ardently looked forward to, arrived at last. I had been engaged in unpacking the flowers that were arriving all the afternoon from the neighbouring conservatories, while Dick was amusing himself brewing cold punch in the lodge. The girls were out walking; and, when my work was over, I took a stroll along the beach to meet them. Up to this time the weather had been glorious; such a summer and autumn as few could remember: but now I saw, with some anxiety, there was every appearance of an unfavourable change. Although not a breath of wind stirred, the ground-swell broke heavily on the bar, and there was a greenish look in the sky where the sun was setting, that boded no good. The curlews were unusually noisy, their clear, shrill whistle resounding on all sides, and large flocks of sea-birds were flying in towards the land. A fishing-boat had just made fast to the pier, and the owner came forward to meet me.

“What luck this evening, Barney?” I inquired.

“Just middlin’, yer honour. There’s a dozen of lobsters, a John Dory, and a turbot. I’ll send them to the lodge. The oysters went up this morning—iligrant ones, they wor; raal jewels.”

“All right, Barney—what do you think of the weather?”

“Sorra one of me likes it, at all. Them thieves of seals are rollin’ about like *purposes*, and it isn’t for nothin’ they do that same. It’ll be a Ballintogher wind, too, before long, I’m thinkin’.”

“A what?” I exclaimed.

“The very question the captain axed my brother. It was the first time iver he went to say, and they wor lyin’ somewhere off Afrikay. The captin was walkin’ the quarter-deck when my brother comes up to him, and says, ‘Captain Leslie, you had better shorten sail.’

“‘Why so?’ ses the captin, very sharp.

“‘Bekase it’s a Ballintogher wind.’

“‘And what the d—l wind may that be?’

“‘Oh murther!’ ses my brother. ‘There you are, wandherin’ about the world all yer life, and didn’t hear of a Ballintogher wind, when there isn’t a gossoon in my counthry doesn’t know the village it comes from, and that it niver brought anything but cowl’d storm and misforthin’ along with it.’

“Well, with that, they all tuk to laughin’ like to split their sides at my brother, an’ the captin, he towld him to go forrid and mind his work; but faith, they worn’t laughin’ two hours afther, when the ship rowled the masts out of her, and they

wor wracked among the haythens. But wind or no wind, yer honour, I suppose the races will come off?"

"So I hear, Barney."

"I'm towld there's to be a fight between the Flahertys and the O'Donnells; but shure av the priest's there it's no use for them to try."

"Why not, Barney?"

"He's mighty handy with a hunting-whip, an' has got a bad curse besides. He hot Mickey Devine over the head, for trying to rise a row at the fair of Dingle, and left a hole in it you might put your fist in. It was no great things of a head at the best of times, but faith, he's quare in it at the full of the moon iver since. He cursed Paddy Keolaghan, too, last Easter, an' the luck left him. His nets wor carried away, the boat stove in, and the pig died. I don't give in to the pig myself, for they let him get at the long lines afther they wor baited; and sure enough when the craythur died, there was fifteen hooks in his inside, enough to kill any baste. Besides, his reverence is very partikler, an' wouldn't curse a Christian out of his own parish; but it's not lucky to cross him anyhow; an' if he's there to-morrow, sorra bit of fun we'll have. They say yer honours are for givin' a ball afther the races."

“So we are, Barney; and that reminds me—tell the girls to come up the next night, and we’ll give them a dance before the tent is taken down.”

“Long life to yer honour! It’s proud and happy they will be to go. Here’s the young ladies comin’. Good evenin’, sir! We’ll be on the coorse to-morrow, an’ see you get fair play, anyhow.”

The tent-ropes flapped ominously that night as we turned in, and before morning a storm came on which increased to a hurricane, when our party assembled for breakfast, and looked out disconsolately enough at the boiling sea, dimly visible through the driving rain and spray that dashed in sheets of water against the glass. Already numbers of the peasantry, on their way to the course, were staggering along the road, vainly trying to shelter themselves from the furious blast which made the very walls of the lodge shake. Taking advantage of a slight lull, we managed to get a young fir-tree propped up against the pole of the tent, and had just returned to the house when a well-appointed four-in-hand came at a sharp trot up the avenue.

“Here come the Plungers,” said Dick. “Plucky fellows to drive over fourteen miles such a morning.”

While he was speaking, a dozen bearded men got down and stalked solemnly into the room. In a few minutes the ladies of our party made their appearance, and before long the new comers were busily engaged in some fashion or another. I have often admired the way in which Irish ladies contrive to make the "lords of the creation" useful, but never saw it more strongly exemplified than on the present occasion. Here you might see a grave colonel employed in the composition of a lobster salad ; there a V.C. opening oysters as industriously as an old woman at a stall ; while in a snug corner, a couple of cornets were filling custard cups and arranging flowers. To do the gallant fellows justice they accepted the situation frankly, and set to work like men, while at every fresh blast the girls' spirits seemed to rise higher ; and before long a merrier party could hardly be found anywhere. Twelve o'clock had now come round, at which time, it was unanimously agreed, the day must clear up ; and a slight gleam of watery sunshine appearing, we all started to carry the things over to the supper-room of the tent. As we mustered a tolerably strong party, in less than an hour this was effected, not, however, without sundry mishaps ; one poor cornet being blown right over a fence, into a wet ditch, with his burden.

We were all so much engaged laying out the tables, that the increasing darkness of the day was scarcely remarked until a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a loud peal of thunder which broke directly overhead, made the boldest pause for a moment in his occupation. The storm, which had gone down considerably, burst forth again worse than ever, the tent-pole swayed to and fro like a fishing-rod, and the fir-tree we had lashed alongside for additional security threatened every moment to come down by the run. Matters were beginning to look serious, when Dick, snatching a carving-knife from the table, cut an opening in the wall of the tent, through which we all bolted into the open air. Hardly had we got clear of the ropes, when the tent-pole snapped, the pegs gave way, the roof flew off down the wind, and with a crash of broken glass, heard distinctly above the howling of the wind and sea, the whole fabric came to the ground, burying all our materials and the greater part of the supper in the ruins.

All was over now,—“the stars in their courses” had fought against us. There was no use in contending against fate and the elements; so, after seeing the girls safe in shelter, and leaving the dragoons to test the merits of Dick’s cold punch, I filled my largest pipe with the strongest cavendish,

and had walked round to the lee of the house, to blow a cloud in peace, and think over what was best to be done, when a window opened above, and looking up, I saw a bright sunny face framed against the dark scowling sky, and heard a voice call out, "Wait there one moment, Frank; I am coming down."

Without giving me time to reply, the face disappeared, but immediately afterwards a small slight figure, closely muffled up, glided round the corner, and put its arm in mine, while a pair of blue eyes looked up appealingly in my face.

"Don't look so down-hearted, Frank, or you will make me cry. I could hardly keep from it, when I saw the tent in ruins, and heard that dreadful crash. All Lady ——'s old china, I promised to take such care of, and the flowers, and Mrs ——'s dinner service, that has been in the family for four generations. It is a downright calamity; but we are determined, happen what will, to have the ball, and I want you to come to look at a barn we saw the other day."

"But you cannot think of going out in such weather!"

"Not by the road—the sea is all across it. But we can go by the fields. Come now, and take great care of me."

We did reach the barn, though with great difficulty ; and, at first sight, a more unlikely or unpromising place could hardly be found. In one corner stood a heap of straw and a winnowing machine, under which half a dozen rats scampered as we came in. The roof was thatched, and in several places we could see the sky through it. Long strings of floating cobwebs hung from the rafters, and the rough walls were thickly coated with dust. There were two storeys to it, however ; the floor of the upper one was boarded and seemed sound. Taking out a note-book, my companion seated herself on an old garden-roller, saying—

“ Go down-stairs, Frank, and finish your smoke ; I want to think for five minutes ; or you may stay here, if you promise not to speak until I give you leave.”

I gave the required pledge, and, lighting my pipe, lay down in a corner, watching the rats peering out with their sharp, black, beady eyes at the strange visitors, and rather enjoying the confusion of the spiders, who, not relishing the smoke, were making off out of reach as fast as they could. Before long my companion called me over, to give her directions, which were, to go back to the lodge, and bring all the volunteers I could get, as well as some materials, of which she gave me a list.

On my way I met one of the stewards, who told me the races had been postponed until four o'clock in the afternoon, and on reaching the lodge found Dick and the officers engaged in recovering "salvage" from the tent. Getting out a wagonette, I soon had it filled with volunteers, and drove them over to the barn, where we once more set to work, and for the next few hours the rats and spiders had a bad time of it.

I was hard at work converting some rough deal boards into a supper-table, when a little boy handed me a note, saying—

"They are clearin' the coorse, yer honour; you haven't a minit to lose; I brought down a 'baste' for you."

The note was from Dick, telling me the first race would be run off at once. There was a dressing-room provided on the ground, so, jumping on the horse, I rode down.

The storm, after doing all the harm it well could to us, had now cleared off, and the scene on the course was lively and animated enough. A dozen frieze-coated farmers, headed by an old huntsman in scarlet, were galloping wildly about to clear the ground, the usual "dog" being represented, on this occasion, by a legion of curs, barking at the heels of stray donkeys, sheep, cows, and goats, as they

doubled in and out, to avoid the merciless whips of their pursuers ; and when at last they were driven off, the people broke in on the line, and the whole place appeared one mass of inextricable confusion, until the priest, accompanied by the stewards, was found. The fisherman certainly had not belied his reverence. More than once I saw his whip descend with a vigour that made itself felt even through the thick greatcoats worn by the peasantry, causing the recipient to shrink back, shaking his shoulders, and never feeling himself safe until he had put the nearest fence between him and the giver. Soon his stalwart figure, mounted on a stout cob, was the signal for a general *suave qui peut*, and the mob gradually settled into something like order, leaving the course tolerably free.

Six horses came to the post for the first race, which was about three miles on the flat, the priest's of course being the favourite, and with reason. It was a magnificent dark chestnut, with great power and symmetry, showing the "Ishmael" blood in every part of its beautiful frame, Dick's hunter, although thorough-bred, and with a fair turn of speed, looking like a coach-horse beside it. The only other competitor entered worth notice was a light bay, high-bred, but a great, staring, weedy-looking brute, evidently a cast-off from some racing stable.

At the word "Off!" a fair start was effected. The bay, however, had hardly taken a dozen strides, when it came down, giving the rider an ugly fall. After rolling over, it sat up like a dog, and stared wildly about; then, jumping up suddenly, galloped into the sea, where it lay down, apparently with the intention of committing suicide. Before we had gone a mile, all the other horses were shaken off, and the priest's jockey and myself had it all to ourselves. He was a knowing old fellow, and evidently did not wish to distress his horse, keeping only a few lengths ahead, until within the distance-post, when he let him go, cantering in a winner by about twenty yards, and receiving a perfect ovation from the people.

In half an hour the bugle sounded for the horses to fall in for *the* race. A steeple-chase being always the great event on an Irish course, we were about to take our places, when Dick came up with rather a long face, and whispered—

"I am afraid the luck is against us still, Frank. Look at that gray. He has been kept dark until now. Before seeing him I backed you rather heavily with the priest. It was our only chance to get out."

The more I looked the less I liked the appearance of either horse or man. To a casual observer

the first was a plain animal, cross-built, rough in the coat, and with remarkably drooping quarters ; but, on closer inspection, a hunter all over, if not a steeple-chaser, although an attempt had evidently been made to disguise his real character. The saddle was old and patched ; the bridle had a rusty bit, with a piece of string hung rather ostentatiously from it ; the rider might once have been a gentleman, but drink and dissipation had left their mark on what was originally a handsome face. His dress was slovenly and careless to a degree, but he sat his horse splendidly, and his hand was as light and fair as a woman's. He returned my look with a defiant stare.

"That fellow looks dangerous," said Dick ; "but I suspect he is more than half drunk. Make a waiting race until you see what he is made of. Above all things keep cool, and don't lose your temper."

I had perfect confidence in the mare I rode. She had been broken by myself, and many a long day we had hunted together over the big pastures of Roscommon and Meath. There was a thorough understanding between us. My only anxiety was as to how she would face the crowd, who were collected in thousands about every jump, barely leaving room for the horses to pass, and yelling

like a set of Bedlamites let loose. With the exception of the last fence, there were no very formidable obstacles. It was a stone wall, fully five feet high, built up loose, but strong, and rather a severe trial at the end of a race, if the pace was a stiff one throughout. There was no time for thinking now, however. The word was given, and we were away.

About a dozen horses started—all fair animals, with that cat-like activity in negotiating a fence so remarkable in Irish hunting. We had hardly gone a mile, however, when the want of condition began to tell, and they fell hopelessly to the rear, leaving the race to the gray, my mare, and a game little thorough-bred, ridden and owned by one of the dragoon officers.

Up to this time I had followed Dick's directions to wait on the gray, a proceeding evidently not approved of by the rider, for, turning round in his saddle as he came down to a water jump, he said, with a sneer—

“ You want a lead over, I suppose.”

I made no reply, and he went at the river ; but whether by accident or design, when within a few yards of the brink his horse bolted, dashing in among the crowd. The dragoon's swerved slightly to follow ; the rider, however, would not be denied,

and sent him through it ; while my mare, cocking her ears, and turning her head half round, as an old pointer might do at seeing a young one break fence, flew over like a bird, and settled steadily to her work on the other side.

For some distance the dragoon and myself rode neck and neck, though the pace was beginning to tell on his horse, who was slightly overweighted. Our friend on the gray now raced alongside, and galloping recklessly at an awkward ditch, which he cleared, took a lead of a dozen lengths, and kept it until within a short distance of the last fence, when he fell back, allowing us to get to the front once more.

I think fear was the last thing uppermost in my mind as I rode at it. My blood was fairly roused, and passing a carriage a minute before, I got a glance from a pair of blue eyes that would have made a coward brave. Still, with all that, I could not avoid a slight feeling of anxiety as it loomed across, looking about as dangerous an obstacle as the most reckless rider could desire at the end of a race. If stone walls "grew," I could have sworn it had done so since I crossed it on Dick's hunter the evening before. The people had closed in on both sides until there was scarcely twenty feet of clear space in the middle, and evidently a row of some

sort was going on. Sticks were waving wildly about, and a dozen voices shouted for me to stop, while hundreds called to go on. The gray was creeping up, however. I had faced as bad before, when there was less occasion ; so pulled the mare up to a trot until within a few yards, when I let her go with a shout she well knew, and in a second we were safe on the other side. The dragoon's horse refusing, the gray, who came up at full speed, chested it heavily, and horse, rider, and wall came rolling over to the ground together, while I cantered in alone.

I had hardly received the congratulations of the stewards, when Dick came up, looking flushed and excited. As he grasped my hand, he said hurriedly—

“ Why didn't you stop when I shouted ? ”

“ It was too late. But what is wrong ? ”

“ That scoundrel on the gray bribed a couple of fellows to add six inches to the height of the wall during the storm this morning. They raised it nearly a foot. Some one told the priest, but not until you were in the field. He has caught one of them, the other got away. As for the fellow himself, his collar-bone is smashed, and the horse all cut to pieces. He couldn't expect better luck. It was a near thing, though. I don't know how the mare

got over it. She must have known," he added, patting her neck, "what a scrape we were in."

The usual hack races for saddles and bridles followed, and the day's sport came to an end without a fight, thanks to the priest, whose exertions to keep the peace would have satisfied a community of Quakers, although they might not approve of the mode by which the object was effected.

We had hardly finished dinner at the lodge, when the carriages with our guests for the ball began to arrive, those from a distance looking with dismay at the wreck of the tent, that still lay strewed on the lawn. They were all directed forward to the barn, however, whither we were soon prepared to follow.

Although my confidence in the ability and resources of the ladies of our party was nearly unlimited, I could hardly avoid feeling some slight misgivings on entering the barn, knowing the short time they had to work in, and how heavily the mishap of the morning must have told against them. All, however, agreed that they had seldom seen a prettier room. The walls and roof were completely covered with fishing-nets, filled in and concealed by purple and white heath. The effect was remark-

ably good; and if the storm had deprived the supper-table of many of the light dishes, quite enough was left to satisfy guests who were not disposed to be critical.

I shall not detain the reader by giving a description of the ball, which proved a complete success, more than compensating us for the trouble and anxiety we had undergone. It was seldom the girls in the neighbourhood had a chance of enjoying themselves in that way, and they seemed resolved to make the most of it. Human endurance, however, has its limits. Towards morning the band, whose "staying powers" were sorely tried, began to show symptoms of mutiny. Threats and bribes (the latter too often administered in the shape of champagne) were tried, and they were induced to continue for another hour. The result may easily be anticipated: they broke down hopelessly, at last, in the middle of "Sir Roger." A sudden change in the music made us all stop, and to our dismay we found one half of the performers playing "God save the Queen." The others had just commenced "*Partant pour la Syrie*," while the "big drum" was furiously beating the "tattoo" in a corner. Turning them all out, we threw open the windows. A flood of sunshine poured into the room, and the cool fresh sea breeze swept joyously round, extinguishing the lights. This

was the signal for a general departure. One by one our fair guests drove away, leaving

“The banquet-hall deserted.”

The last man to go was the priest. As he mounted his horse I saw him hand Dick a sheaf of dingy-looking bank-notes, and they parted, hoping to meet again the following season, when the latter pledged himself to bring something out of his own stable to race against the mare. But we only appeared there once since in public, and that was at a wedding. Before the next autumn came round we had settled down into steady married men. I still hunt, but have grown stouter, and the old mare has given place to a weight-carrier. The mare draws my wife and children to church regularly, however, and though rather matronly-looking, is as full of life and spirit as when she started with her master to win his first and “last” steeple-chase.

SALMON-SPEARING

HEI mihi præteritum tempus! That is, the past time when new Fishery Laws did not forbid, and we young sportsmen might combat the salmon in his own element, armed, like the Retiarius, with a trident, but, unlike him, without a net. Ill-omened word! is it not to thee that the interdict is owing? —blockading the mouth of every river with thy cowardly meshes, only withdrawn for the barest minimum of hours out of the twenty-four to give free passage to the home-sick fish and lusty grilse to re-seek the dear old pools of his birth. For the grace now extended, and the check put upon the rapacious suppliers of Billingsgate and Leadenhall, we shall ever be grateful to the Commissioners, even though the same powers that have removed the stake-nets have prohibited the use of the spear, whose operation, as numbered amongst the things past, we purpose to record.

And first for the science of the sport. Salmon-spearing, as we used to perform it, was of two kinds. First, that by day; second, that by night. For the

first, we choose that day when the more noble art of the rod and fly would be exercised in vain—a clear sunny day, with as little ripple as possible, and the water low, the field of operation being generally the upper pools, or, in preference, the larger “burn” or mountain stream whence the river took its source.

The implements, a spear, or rather iron trident of three prongs, barbed like a fish-hook, the prongs being about two inches apart, with a shaft some ten feet in length; two or three long poles, whose uses will be seen presently, and either a “gaff” or a landing-net. The essentials, a hawk-like keenness of eye sharpened by long practice, a goat-like agility amongst rocks and stones, and a philosophical indifference to all such minor discomforts as a complete wetting and a frequent fall or bruise. The night-work differed in the change of locality, the favourite spot being the long shallow “reach” at the river’s mouth, and in the substitution of fir-torches for the poles of the day’s programme. Thus much for the nature of the sport; for a description of it let the reader lend a kindly ear while we suppose the scene by the banks of the river Arkail, in the Northern Highlands of Scotland (a name which, by the way, he will in vain try to establish in the best of educational atlases or tourists’ guides).

“What a baking day! No use taking out the

dogs ; there's not a breath of scent along the whole hill-side ; and one might as well try to fish in a tub as throw a line over the looking-glass-like pools to-day. "What's to be the order of the day, Frank ? I think I shall take a walk up to the top of Ben Voil and 'spy' if there are any deer lying near the ground."

"I don't think you can do better. We have already planned a foray with the spear in the Upper Pools ; but you don't care about that sort of work ; so good luck to you, and adieu for the present. I suppose you'll take Stuart with you ?"

Even as he spoke a cheery voice outside had summoned Frank, warning him that his set were waiting ; so, with a parting remembrance from Charles Marston, the eldest of our party, and the tacitly-acknowledged head, to "mind and 'crimp' your fish directly you get him out of the water," Frank Gordon hastened to the gravelled square in front of the lodge, and found his brother amongst a group of keepers and "gillies," who, by the arms they bore, gave sufficient evidence of their intended occupation. With the exception of a "forester," Hugh Ross, who, by virtue of his position and his long Gaelic descent, persevered in the traditions of his ancestors, and robed his limbs in a kilt of home-spun tartan, the rest of the sportsmen were clad in

knickerbockers, master and man alike. And now they were off, and making down the "brae" with the long dropping action which marks the practical mountaineer, being greeted as they passed the kennels by the most dismal howling from the dogs, who evidently did not comprehend that spears were not guns, and that there were occasions, such as salmon-spearing, on which their services might be dispensed with, and who further interpreted the volley of mingled Gaelic and Sassenach ejaculations hurled at them as a command to increase their note from *forte* to *fortissimo*, a proceeding accordingly executed with the most painful exactness which the canine intellect could suggest.

A short half-hour's walk, and the hollow moaning of a waterfall told of the journey's end. Brushing through a small birch-wood that clothed the high banks of the stream, our party stood on the edge of a sheer rock about thirty feet high, and, looking down on the scene of their intended operations, assigned to each his post and duty. A long, narrow, black pool, shallowing towards the tail into a rushing stream, dashing madly against the boulders scattered at random in its course; the rocks rising steep and bare on either side, but fringed on their summits with the drooping birch-trees and overhanging heather nestling round the delicate little

ferns and rock-plants that peeped timidly out here and there ; and away at the head of the pool, the finishing charm of the lovely spot, the tumbling waterfall, which ever filled the air with its clamorous voice, and beat the red waters below into a mad whirl of eddies and bubbles and leaping foam. Truly as sweet a picture as Nature ever limned, which, had it been a few degrees farther south, might have been an unfailing trap for excursionists to expend their savings on a "pack" in a covered carriage, and a cheap ride *uninsured*, or might have had its heath-covered banks dotted with picnic parties, and its waters sweetened with the chicken-bones so deftly thrown by the playful Miss Holiday ; but being, alas, poor Monar—only one of many such scenes in the bosom of the Highland hills, *all* inaccessible by steam or jaunting-car—it must e'en remain unknown, save to the privileged few, who now looked at it with the less noble view of how they might draw a fish from its black depths.

"Ah, wunna ye look at him? Hech, doon he comes ; ye maun e'en try again, my bonny mon."

This address was called forth from honest Sandy Macgregor, one of the gillies of the party, by the sight of a salmon leaping at the falls, but who, having failed to clear them, hit with a heavy

whack against the rock, and, with a vain wriggle and struggle, fell back into the pool beneath.

"You may see more of him yet, Sandy," said Alick Gordon, the elder of the brothers, "if meanwhile you will try and get me a little gravel."

A few minutes, and Sandy returned, bringing his cap full of sand and small stones, which Alick, taking, threw in handfuls down the pool, close by the edge of the rock. The result of this mysterious proceeding, being closely watched by the group, was announced by a general murmur of satisfaction as, almost straight beneath them, a string of bubbles rose to the surface of the stream and floated idly away. (For the benefit of those who have never seen this piece of fishing-craft, we may explain that, as a fish is lying at the bottom with his head up stream, allowing the water to run into his mouth and out through his gills—his mode of breathing—some of the gravel as it sinks down enters his mouth, and as the fish ejects it, he sends up a few bubbles, which mark the spot he is lying in.)

"Is that your friend, Sandy?" cried Alick, on seeing the success of his device. "You ought to know him if you saw him again, so come along down here with me."

Away went the speaker to the farther end of the pool, where, by scrambling and swinging, he managed

to let himself down the rock, and plunged knee deep into the rapids. Closely followed by Sandy, he made his way towards the deep water, keeping close beneath the high bank, where he knew that, at about the depth of his waist, a small ledge ran along the rock which would afford him a footing. Quietly and carefully he arrived at the spot where the bubbles had been seen to rise; and telling Sandy to hold him round the waist, as he stood beside him on their precarious footing, he took off his cap, and holding it over the water so as to throw a shade in which the smallest objects at the bottom of the stream were visible to his practised eye, he bent down, and began a long and wary search. One unaccustomed to the work might have looked till nightfall without seeing more than the changing lights and shadows playing over the deep-sunk stones; but Alick's experience soon showed him a long black object, like a shade, lying close by the rock, and in about nine feet of water. Having satisfied himself as to the exact position of his treasure-trove, he shouted a warning to the group above, and told Sandy to take a look.

"Ah, the big blackguard!" whispered the gillie, as he lifted his dripping face after his subaqueous search. "Have a care, Mister Alick, and give him the point well over the shouter."

“Hold up tight then, Sandy, and give a shade with your cap as I tell you. That’s right; no, a little further out—now then, steady!”

As he spoke, Gordon was slowly letting down the spear a little behind the salmon, till, when it was about a foot above the fish, he paused, and braced himself for the stroke, his left hand grasping the spear about halfway down, to guide the aim, and the right hand holding it near the top to give the blow, while his face was nearly buried in the water, as he kept his eye on his prey.

“Further out yet with the cap, Sandy. Now, hold on!”

Down shot the spear: for one instant the shaft shook violently as the struck salmon struggled beneath the weight which was pinning it to the bottom, and the next, with a loud splash and flurry, the strong fish bore to the surface, and shaking himself off the barbs, dragged Gordon, still holding on to the spear, headlong into the pool.

A loud shout from the watchers on the top of the precipice greeted this “coup,” and on the gillie, who had been posted near the bottom of the pool, announcing that “the fish had ne’er come his way,” all those who had, up to this time, been mere passive spectators, made the best of their way down the rocks, to take their part in the coming struggle.

With a few strokes Alick gained the shallows at the tail of the pool, and as the stream divided into two chief courses, himself commanded one with his spear, and deputed the other to Hugh Ross. Meanwhile, Frank was directing the gillies, who were "poking" the fall and deep water with the long poles we mentioned, a proceeding intended to drive any fish that might be lying about there down to the lower end of the pool, where they would meet the spearmen, or else to take refuge behind the big rocks and boulders, where they might be discovered afterwards. All was noise and eagerness, save with the two spearmen, who, silent as statues, were keenly watching the few yards of clear water in front of them, ready to spring into life the moment they detected the approach of a fish. And as Hugh Ross looked, a black shadow of a sudden swept down with the current before him, and as he moved a step to meet it, whisked away, and shot past him with the arrow-like speed which a salmon, better than any fish that swims, can command; but the active Highlander was a match for the occasion, and with a dexterity which must be seen to be appreciated, gave a backward spring, and struck sharp down with his spear a good two feet in front of his mark; and as he held the struggling fish down by bearing with his

whole weight on his weapon, the shaking shaft told of the good quarry he had secured. With a wild shout of triumph Alick rushed to the rescue, and throwing himself down in the water, seized the salmon under the gills, and quickly bore him to land, where Marston's injunction was acted upon, and the crimping-knife brought into play.

"Ye took a good shot, too, Mister Alick," said Hugh Ross, looking at the wound behind the head which Gordon had given; "but he was a clean-run fish, and as full of life as a stag in August; and I'm thinking he will not have joost right justice at fifteen pounds' weight."

"I'd be sorry to carry him at that weight, Hugh," answered his master. "But all the merit belongs to you, for little should we ever have seen of him again but for that flying shot of yours. However, there he is, and a beautifully-shaped fish too; so tie him up, and let's carry him off to the house, where you'll get glory enough from both Mr Marston and the cook. Come along Frank."

So saying, Alick marched away, followed by the rest of the party. On arriving at the lodge, they found that Marston had not yet returned; so it being still early in the day, they debated as to the best method of employing the time yet

left them ; and as the bright still weather effectually negatived all propositions of going after grouse or taking a cast with a fly in any of the Upper Pools, the suggestion of Hugh Ross who had become unusually keen after his triumph of the morning, to rest till the evening and then make a night of it with the spear at the mouth of the river Arkail, was unanimously adopted. There was a good thirteen miles' walk over the hill between the lodge and the intended scene of the night's operation, but our hardy young sportsmen regarded that only so far as to order their dinner at an earlier hour than usual, so as to start in time in the evening, and employed the intervening period in tying up bundles of fir-splinters to make torches, and in providing themselves with dry suits of clothing, after the wetting they had just received.

Shortly before seven o'clock they were ready to start, and having left a note for Marston, who had not yet returned from the hill, they set out, following Hugh Ross in single file, as he led the way over the darkening moor. All were too well accustomed to the work to come to much grief over the broken ground, beyond an occasional stumble or sudden fall as the foot slipped into an unseen hole in the moss; and before long the autumn moon rose full and bright to light their way, promising an idle time of

it to the torches, which some of the gillies bore patiently on.

It was not yet eleven o'clock when the sportsmen stood on the banks of the Arkail, looking happily across the broad river, which flowed musically over its shallow bed, showing almost clearer in the silver radiance of the moon than in the dazzling splendour which lit it up during the day; but across on the opposite bank the trees which fringed its sides stood out black and heavy as a wall of rock.

“What a glorious night!” exclaimed Alick, as the scene first burst upon him. “Look, Frank, away over there where the river runs into the Firth; that bit of it you see by the farthest corner gleams like a sheet of pure silver, and the Inch-na-coul hills look as if they were touched with hoarfrost. Isn't it pretty? and what a night for us! Come on, Hugh and Sandy there, let's be getting to work, but warm the cockles of your heart first with a drop of whisky. Here, try my flask, Hugh. That's right—the same to you, thanks, and good luck to us both,” as the forester drank his young master's health; “and I think I shall stay about here with Mr Frank, if you will go a little lower down and post the boys, and tell them to keep a sharp look-out, and mind and ‘holloa’ in time; and I say, Donald there, don't you be giving us any

stones for fish to-night, you rascal." (This was in reference to a false alarm raised on a previous occasion by the unhappy Donald, who had mistaken the ripple caused by a stone lying in the way of the stream for the wake made by a travelling salmon, and had given notice accordingly : and while here, we may explain that the *modus operandi* in salmon-spearing by night is to post watchers down the bank at regular intervals, who on seeing the wake of a fish going steadily up stream—and remember that salmon only travel or run up a river at night—shout to the spearmen above to give notice, who, being put on the alert, wait till they also see the little wave which marks their prey, and then walk into the river to meet it.)

Away went Hugh and his subordinates, leaving the brothers to choose their own positions ; and as Alick walked off announcing his intention of crossing the river and taking one of the gillies with him to command the opposite side, Frank remained alone gazing at the running stream before him, and taking stock of all the ripples and eddies caused by the larger stones in the bed of the river, so that in the heat of the moment, when instantly expecting the salmon of which notice might have been given, he might not fall into Donald's error, and confound the inanimate with the living agent. The witching

stillness of the night, broken only by the monotonous gurgling of the running waters and the soft whispering of the trees, before long lulled the young watcher into a state of semi-consciousness, in which he sat with open eyes staring forward into the space before him, with a dim remembrance that he was looking out for salmon, and that the white flood beneath him was a river and the appointed subject of his closest observation ; but a whole shoal of salmon might have passed and dubbed him wisest of men for the blissful ignorance he would have manifested of their presence, had not a sudden shout of " Mark ! " roused him from his somnolence and recalled his wits to full life and activity. With ear and eye painfully alert, he heard the shout taken up by the next gillie, and the sound of his feet over the gravel as he ran along the river's side to keep his prey in view ; then the noise of some one cautiously wading out in the water, a sudden rush and splashing, and the next minute a clamour of voices, amongst which he could discern that of Hugh Ross calling for a light ; and as he looked far down the stream he saw a torch coming down the bank and borne into the river, and the flare of the smoking pine-wood showed him a dark group standing in the water, and for one moment he fancied he saw the gleam of a fish being lifted out !

and then, as the group retreated to the bank, he again distinguished Hugh's voice good-humouredly depreciating his own prowess, by proclaiming the unimportance of his capture, which was "joost a sma' grilse, and no worth the mentionin', an' it were not for makin' up the number."

The commotion created by this incident had barely subsided, when again a sharp cry through the stillness of the night announced the approach of another fish, and again Frank heard the warning taken up by one watcher after another, when, as he stayed expecting each instant to hear Hugh anticipate him in the encounter, his eye caught a moving ripple in the water, a small advancing wave tailing into a broad wake, and with a wild feeling of excitement he dropped into the river and waded carefully in to meet it: he was yet six or seven yards above it, as he stood nervously grasping his spear, and still he stood motionless as a statue, till the wave washed up close beside him, when sharp and sudden he launched out his spear—swish!—and the iron rattled on the pebbles in the river, as the salmon dived down beneath the blow which had grazed its back, and shot away up the stream.

"Alick, Alick, come here, I'm sure I struck it!" shouted the eager boy, as he rushed headlong after his prey, ever and anon tripping over a stone and

falling with a loud splash into the shallow water, which for more than a mile from the mouth of the Arkail was rarely more than three feet deep; but though he every now and then fancied he saw the salmon's wake still bearing on before him, he ran to little purpose but to cover himself with wounds and bruises from head to foot, and was on the very point of giving up his fruitless chase, from sheer exhaustion, when a cry from his brother, sounding ahead of him, urged him on, and as he turned a corner round which the river swept in a sharp curve, he came upon Alick standing near the bank and pinning something down with his spear to the bottom of the water. "Go down and get him under the gills, old boy," was his brother's greeting, as Frank stumbled breathlessly up; "he's a regular monster, and will take you all you know to carry him in; but I think he's your friend, and he will count as yours, if we find your mark on him." "First spear" always counted in the Sunderbunds' (a precedent advanced by the speaker from his reminiscences of pig-sticking in Lower Bengal).

"There it is then, Alick," said Frank, as he laid the fish down on the river's bank and pointed to a jagged cut a little behind the dorsal fin. "I did not allow enough in front, and should never have seen him again but for you; but isn't he a thick

fellow, and I can answer for his weight already. I shouldn't care about carrying him to the lodge, I know ; but I suppose we had better take him back to the others, so we may tie him up, if you have a bit of string with you. Thanks,—that will do capitally."

Reader, I hope we have not failed by this time to give you an insight into the mysteries of a sport which, though now defended by stringent penalties, was no unworthy one in its time, requiring, as it did, the utmost dexterity, training, and endurance : three objects which in themselves are sufficient to elevate any pursuit which can promote them, and which many seek to acquire amongst the mountains of Switzerland or the hills of Scotland. In a lesser way, after the fatigues of the London season, the gentler sex strive to attain the same end by walking, riding, sailing, or otherwise recruiting with fresh country air.

CARPE DIEM

WHEN one gets ever such a little older, one gets very much more disinclined to take much trouble, much physical trouble that is, about hobbies which once were ridden to death. A few years ago it was a pleasure to get up at two o'clock in the morning, and have six hours' fishing before it became necessary to get to work at Blackstone and Chitty, and the endless writing of "common forms"; now I prefer keeping within the sheets until breakfast-time, and leaving fishing expeditions for legitimate holidays. So that, as holidays are not very frequent, and often necessarily taken up in other ways, and as fishing stations are distant, and not easily accessible, my hand is in danger of forgetting its cunning in wielding a fishing-rod. I do not so much miss my favourite sport, until, in an unfortunate hour, I get hold of a book of angling reminiscences, of which there are plenty, and reading in its pages vivid descriptions of days by the riverside, such as I used to experience myself, my fancy sets to work, and, aided by memory, conjures up such

delightful visions that at last I cannot sit still ; the room, ay, and the town, seem to stifle me, and I long for a glorious ramble, rod in hand, as much as I ever did.

Following close upon the perusal of such a book, and the feelings awakened by it, I was pleased beyond measure to find myself possessed of a few days of leisure, and once more in the bonny border land of Wales. I took care to make the most of my time, and seize the opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with some of those charming spots with which, as an angler and a writer, I had in times past identified myself.

One day I spent in tracing the wanderings of the burn whence a lusty trout had been transferred to my pannier. Another afternoon I set out for a carp pool, not *the* carp pool *par excellence* of our boyish days, but one nearly as good, where I had caught some six-pounders years ago. I walked to the place—it was two miles and a half away—burdened with three rods and a huge bagful of worms, intent upon slaughter. I neared the field, I crossed the hedge. I stood still and gazed in astonishment. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. *There was no pool there.* I walked round the field and across the field, which was strewn with clumps of rushes. A peewit had laid four eggs on the

very spot, as I calculated, where I had hooked my biggest carp. A small boy hove in sight. I seized him, and asked him where the pool had gone. He answered, "Whoy, mun, it ha' been drained dry these three years." I sat upon a gate and smoked four cigarettes, then walked home, my rods feeling twice as heavy as when I came that way.

I was to be recompensed, however, for my disappointment by a day at the carp pool on the hill at Craigyrhiw, Coed-y-gar, or Penycloed, for it goes by all three names, the first being the most proper. By accident I met an old friend from a distance, who, when he heard where I was bound to, offered to accompany me. I was glad of his companionship for more than one reason. He had affected to disbelieve my accounts of the big fish to be caught there, and this was an opportunity of vindicating myself from the charge of exaggeration. He got his rods and we started, pausing on the way to get a couple of small Melton Mowbray pies for lunch. My friend, whom I shall call A., left the commissariat department to me, and I, having just had a good breakfast, did not contemplate the possibility of becoming very hungry during the day, so considered we should have quite sufficient to recruit ourselves with. Leaving the town, we passed under the beautiful avenue of limes in the church-

yard, musical with rooks and sweet with the spring fragrance, and so on to Oswald's Well. Under a tree at this spot King Oswald fell in battle, and out of the ground afterward sprang water, said to be endowed with healing power. The well is neatly arched over with stone, and has an effigy of King Oswald at the back; but the latter offered too good a mark for the stones of the grammar-school lads to remain undefaced. Oswaldestree is now corrupted into Oswestry, or more commonly among the country people, Hogestry or Osistry. Just above the well is the present battle-ground, where affairs of honour among the schoolboys are, or used to be, settled by an appeal to fisticuffs.

Crossing Llanvorda Park we enter Craigvorda woods, at once the most beautiful and picturesque of the many similar woods on the borders. The ground is mossy underfoot, the trees meet overhead, glossy green ferns pave the noble corridors, which have for pillars straight and sturdy firs and larch, and for a roof the heavy foliage of interwoven sycamore and oak. At intervals the chestnut too lifts its gigantic nosegay of pink and white and yellow flower-spikes, and near it, out of some craggy knoll, the "lady of the forest," the silver birch, bends tenderly over the masses of blue hyacinths below. "The shade is silent and dark and

green, and the boughs so thickly are twined across, that little of the blue sky is seen between ;” but there is no lack of blue underfoot, for the hyacinths seem to have claimed the wood as their own property, and shine like a shimmering sea of blue between the tree-stems, quite putting out of countenance with their blaze of colour the modest violet, growing by the side of the runnels leaping downward to join the noisy brook.

We crossed the Morda, a purling trout stream, out of which you may easily basket a score of trout in the spring ; up a lane, the banks of which were crowded so thickly with spring flowers, starwort, and other snow-white flowers, deep-blue germander speedwells, red ragged robins, and wild geraniums, monkshood, daisies, dandelions, and buttercups, that the green of the leaves and grasses was quite absorbed and lost in the brighter hues ; up and up, until our legs began to ache, and at last we came to the crest of the hill, in the hollow a few feet below which lay the tarn, gloomy enough, but weirdly beautiful. The water itself looked green from the prevailing colour of the rushes and flags, and the deep belt of green alders, which grew half in and half out of it all round.

“ Look,” I said, “ there are two herons, a couple of wild-ducks, with their young brood just hatched,

twenty or thirty coots and waterhens, and some black leaves sticking up out of the water, which are the things we are after."

"What do you mean?" asked A.

"They are the back fins of carp."

A.'s rods—he had two, as I had—were put together with remarkable quickness. I took it more leisurely, and watched him searching about for a place to cast his line in, with some amusement.

"I say, how are we to get at the water?" he cried.

"Wade." But this he was averse to doing. He found a log of wood, and pushing it out beyond the bushes, where it was very shallow, he took his stand upon it in a very wobbly state, with a rod in either hand. I took up a position a short distance from him, and we waited patiently for half an hour without a bite. Suddenly I heard a splash, and looking round, saw that A. had slipped off his perch, and was halfway up to his knees in water, with a broken rod and a most rueful expression on his face.

"I have lost such a beauty."

"Serves you right. You can't pitch a big carp out like you could a trout. This is the way—see."

I struck at a decided bite, and found that I was fast in a good fish, which, after a lively bit of splashing and dashing about (the water was only knee-deep, though so muddy the fish could not see us), I led into a little haven or pond, where the inmates of a cottage in the wood came to get their water, and lifted him out with my hands—a tidy fish of three pounds in weight. In about a quarter of an hour A.'s float moved slightly. He was all excitement directly. He had never caught anything larger than a half-pound trout. Some minutes elapsed before another movement took place.

“He has left it,” said A.

“No, he has not. Don't move; you will get him presently.”

Then the float or quill gave a couple of dips; then in a few seconds more moved off with increasing rapidity. “Now strike. A. did so, and soon landed a carp of two pounds. From that time we had steady sport throughout the day. Every quarter of an hour one of us had a bite; and although we missed a good many through striking too soon, our respective heaps of golden-brown fish (very few of the carp there are at all white) grew rapidly in size.

As we were coming back from a small larch-tree

where we had found a beautifully constructed golden-crested wren's nest, suspended from the under side of a branch, A. suddenly clasped me round the middle, and gave me a very neat back throw.

"Hullo! what's that for?" I exclaimed, considerably astonished as I sat on the ground.

"Your foot was just poised over that beggar," he said, pointing to a big brown adder, which was gliding away like an animated ash-stick.

"Ah, thanks; there are too many of those fellows here."

We had eaten the two pies, and as four o'clock drew near we got mighty hungry again.

"Just hand me over another pie, old fellow, Nature abhors a vacuum," said A.

"I haven't got any more," I answered.

"Not got any more? O dear!" After a pause, "I *am* hungry." In a little while longer A. started off, saying, "You mind my rod while I am away. I am going foraging for food. I'll try and catch a rabbit, and eat him alive, oh! I've been meditating upon those fish, but I don't like the look of them."

He was gone for about half an hour, during which time I had landed three fish. When he came back he had the countenance of a man who had dined well. He said to me,

“Go as straight as you can through the wood in that direction, and you will come to a cottage where there is plenty of hot tea, a loaf of bread, and some butter awaiting you. I never dined better in all my life, and I forgive you for only bringing two pies.”

I obeyed his directions, and the tea certainly was refreshing, although I could not get any sugar with it.

It was time to be going. We counted our fish. I had eleven (my usual number at that pool, by the way), and A. had ten, most from two to three pounds each, but one or two heavier. We selected the best, and as many as we could conveniently carry, and gave the rest to some cottagers.

From the shooting-box, which is at the top of the hill, and is, by the way, in a state of dilapidation, we had a most magnificent view, one well worth the walk to see. It was a view which embraced Shropshire, Cheshire, Montgomeryshire, Denbighshire, and Merionethshire. In the vividly green valley below us the little village of Llansilin slumbered, scarcely noticeable were it not for the dark and massy yew-trees in its churchyard.

From the rocks farther on we saw a pretty sight. A fox was standing on a stone, and on a sloping slab beneath her five cubs were sprawling and gambling about like a lot of Newfoundland puppies.

Presently the vixen trotted off a little way and lay down ; and while we were watching her a rabbit popped out of his burrow, and came several yards towards Reynard without seeing her. With one bound fox was upon bunny, and the pair rolled over and over down the hill. The captor then slunk off with her captive, not to her young ones, but to a quiet hole in the cliff, to have a gorge all by her greedy self.

In a hollow tree in the cliff we found three jackdaws' nests, each with four eggs in ; and we were amused at watching a woodpecker tapping away at a tree. The noise produced was like that made by drawing a stick very rapidly over some wooden palings, and quite as loud, or even more like a watchman's rattle worked rather slowly. A curious spectacle was presented in the lane on going home. It was a warm damp night, and every dozen yards or so a glowworm exhibited its eerie light, and each successive one seemed to shine more whitely and brightly than the last.

The day was done, its pleasure seized, and—no, not gone, for a pleasant memory remains wherewith to delight myself, and perchance please my friends, among whom I would fain number all angling readers.

NEWMARKET

BY CAPTAIN R. BIRD THOMPSON

NEWMARKET is termed, and justly so, the metropolis of racing, but a greater contrast than Newmarket presents during the race-weeks and the rest of the year can scarcely be imagined. Any one who stood on the top of the hill on the Cambridge road, and looked down the main street, in one of the off-weeks, would think that he had hardly ever seen such a desolate forsaken-looking sort of place ; the only living things to be seen being a few old women standing at the corners of the streets scratching their elbows, and two or three lads lounging about. Occasionally a tradesman will come out of his shop, and, after looking disconsolately up and down the street, will go and look into his own shop-window ; his idea being, I suppose, either to see if he can dress his window more attractively, or that he would rather stare into his own shop-window than that nobody at all should ; and the only way you would discover you were in

a great racing district would be that you might see a string of sheeted racers passing through the street on their way from their training-grounds to their stables ; or if you listened to the old women's or lads' conversation you would hear nothing but about some of the numerous trainers' "lots." The number of empty houses, too, and the bills of auction sales you see posted up everywhere with "In re" So-and-so in the corner, or "By order of the Sheriff," add to the desolateness of the scene. But during the race-weeks all this is altered, and the scene is as exciting and enlivening as it was dull before ; the pavements crowded with men, two huge masses on each side, at the Rooms and White Hart, reminding one strongly of the way bees hang out of their hives previous to swarming. The inhabitants, too, erect stalls down both sides of the street, where all sorts of things are exposed for sale — fruit and vegetables of every kind, and amongst these hampers of a curious vegetable believed by the aborigines to be cucumbers, but to an uninstructed eye looking like a cross between a pumpkin and a hedgehog, so yellow and prickly are they ; large baskets of mushrooms, those esculents which once cost the late Lord George Bentinck so dearly, and which he ever after cursed so heartily. There are stalls also where clothes and

boots are sold, besides others where very dubious-looking confectionery is dealt in, and one I saw which had plates of yellow snail-looking things for sale. I do not know whether racegoers are supposed to eat these things, but if they do they must have uncommonly strong stomachs.

Vehicles of every sort and shape are plying for hire in the street, all of that wonderful kind that seem peculiar to race-meetings, regattas, &c., and which fill a person with wonder to think where they could have been made, and what they were originally intended for. Newmarket is, indeed, worth seeing on the morning of one of the big days, like the Cambridgeshire, to form any idea of the enormous multitude of people attending. It is well worth while to get into the stand at the end of the Rowley Mile as soon as you can, and a most wonderful sight it is to see the huge and incessant mass of people pouring down the side of the course from the old stand ; one unbroken stream, many yards wide, and apparently never ending, yet perfectly quiet and orderly ; no rough horseplay or rowdyism ; composed of men who come for racing, and nothing else. An almost equally large string of vehicles pours down the road, the full ones getting along as fast as they can manage, and those that have discharged their loads galloping back in

hopes of fresh fares. The natural idea of anyone attending for the first time is that there will be an awful crush ; but such is the excellence of Newmarket as a racecourse that there is none whatever, and every one, either on foot or in the stand, can see every race from start to finish, with the exception of those run on the Cesarewitch course, and then no one can see the horses until they come into the straight, with the exception of a bare sight of the start, and a glimpse of them as they pass the Gap, which may be caught by keen-eyed people in the stand. It is really extraordinary to see how the immense crowd that you behold coming seems to dissipate, so that there does not appear to be any very great multitude of people until the races are over, and you turn home ; then you see how enormous the numbers have been, there being a complete block of people from the course right through the town, and even up to the station.

The stand is, as usual, divided into three portions—one for members of the Jockey Club, the second Tattersall's, and the third for the general public ; the two last named are generally full, as all the principal bookmakers assemble here. There is comparative quiet until the numbers for the first race are put up—the only noise to be remarked is the voice of some bookmaker offering to bet on

some big race to come ; but suddenly a peculiar creaking is heard, and a frame rises above the building next to the trainers' stand, with the numbers of the horses starting, and the names of jockeys. There is then a dead silence for a minute or so, whilst people are marking their cards, and next a perfect storm of "four to one, bar one!" or whatever the odds may be, rises from the ring, deafening and utterly bewildering the novice. This storm lasts, if it is not a heavy betting race, not only until the horses are at the post, but even as they are running, and some insane individuals actually offer to bet as to what horse has won after they have passed the post. But if there has been heavy betting a dead silence is maintained in the ring from the time the horses get to the starter until they have passed the post ; this was most remarkably illustrated on the last Cambridgeshire day. From the time the horses got to the starting-post until the race was finished, though there was a delay of three-quarters of an hour, owing to some of the horses repeatedly breaking away, not a sound was heard in the ring ; the silence was almost oppressive. Sometimes when a complete outsider wins, whose name has never been written down by the book-makers, the more excitable of them throw up their hats and cheer

loudly ; but as a body they are a most impassive set of men, and you could never tell by their faces whether they had lost or won. Very curious are they in another way : they never seem to, and I suppose really do not, care a bit about the horses themselves ; many of them not even looking at them when they are running, merely glancing at the winning numbers when put up. They do not appear to be guided in their bets by any regard to the condition of the horses, state or length of the course, or their previous performances, but on what they imagine to be the intentions of the stable to which they belong ; and sometimes they seem to suppose that certain horses take it in turns to win, and back them accordingly, quite independently of the condition of the horse itself. A remarkable instance of this occurred at one Houghton Meeting, in the All-aged Stakes : only two horses were left in for them, Ecossais and Trappist, the former with three pounds the best of the weights. It is true they had run in and out in a very curious way, and this time the bookmakers declared " it was Trappist's turn," and backed him accordingly, giving odds against the other. When they passed the stand on their way to the starting-post, Trappist was going along with his head in the air, fighting with his bit, and with the stiltiest stiffest action possible ; Ecossais

cantering by his side as pleasantly as a lady's hack. But in spite of this, though it must have been evident to anyone that Trappist did not intend to try, and was thoroughly sulky, yet the bookmakers gave him all their support because "it was his day." As was to be expected, Ecossais came right away from him, winning easily ; and great was their wrath.

The principal bookmakers have their regular stations in the ring, where they can be readily found by their customers ; and as they stand there with a pleasant smile on their faces, the old nursery rhyme, " Ducky, ducky, ducky, come and be killed," always comes forcibly into my mind. A very clever-looking set of men they are, and some of them have really intellectual faces. Most wonderful calculators they are too ; the power they have to tell at a glance how much they have got in their books, and the way in which they can subdivide the odds at a moment's notice, is most extraordinary. A marked contrast to these great bookmakers are the small would-be bookmakers, who rush all about the ring, bothering anyone they see who has been betting or they think likely to bet, offering the most absurd odds as an inducement. The first day of any race-meeting these gentry abound ; but by the end of the week most of them have disappeared, having retired, I suspect, into the outer ring, and here

rascality does flourish. Strangely enough, in passing through it, you seem to be familiar with most of the betting men's faces, but you cannot at first remember where you have seen them previously; when suddenly it flashes across you that you saw most of these faces, or their own brothers', in the dock at the last criminal assizes; or if you have been over Portland or Dartmoor prisons, or any of those sort of places, that you have seen them there. How so many of them exist seems hard to discover; but I suspect whenever they have drawn their victims sufficiently, as they consider, they bolt before the race comes off. Another kind of swindling has arisen lately. You are perhaps standing somewhere in the ring, when you discover a person is talking to you, and saying that "Of course you have been backing our stable." You look at him with some surprise, as he is a complete stranger to you; whereupon the man, who is usually tolerably well dressed, and tries to look like a gentleman, apologises for his mistake, "thought you were So-and-so." But, however, he keeps on talking, and you cannot shake him off. At length he declares he knows a *certainly* for the next race, which you must back, and bothers you so that, to get rid of him for the time, you give him some money to invest, which he does; and the tip turning out cor-

rect, as it very often does, you get your money—for the man has no intention of bolting, it would not answer his purpose. But you shortly find out what has occurred, and how you have been done. After the race you compare notes with your friends, feeling rather proud of winning. They ask the price you got, and you say, “O, 4 to 1.” “4 to 1?” say they; “why, his price was 7 to 1.” And then the murder comes out; the scamp got 7 to 1 safe enough, so that he comfortably pocketed the three extra points, and in this way, until detected, doubtless makes a very nice thing of it. But he does not often succeed in drawing the same man twice; and if you take his “tip,” and then insist on getting the odds yourself, his blank face of disgust is very amusing; but he takes care not to let you do this a second time.

At the Spring and Houghton Meetings great amusement is derived from the strong “’Varsity” contingent; these youths appearing in great force, got up in the correctest of sporting costumes; some even going so far as breeches and boots, though they do not as a rule trust themselves astride a horse at the races, and certainly they get all the excitement they can require in the short drive from the turnpike, just off the Cambridge road, down to the stand. Up to this point, as the road has been wide and the

vehicles not numerous, their erratic mode of driving has not been of much importance ; but here, when they get into the stream of cabs, &c., going down to the stand, nothing but a 'Varsity hack in a 'Varsity dog-cart could save them from total and irremediable grief. But it *is* a sight to see the knowing old hack seize the bit between his teeth, and getting his head well down, so as to neutralise any well-meaning but ill-directed attempt at guidance, tear down full speed, close in rear of some galloping cab, and land his passengers, in spite of their exertions, all safe, but rather scared, at the stand. Then the reckless way these youths bet ! To hear them talk, you would think they were more up in racing matters than the oldest member of the Jockey Club, instead of being utterly ignorant of the respective horses, owners, jockeys, or performances ; their actual knowledge never extending to more than the horses' names, and very often not so far as that even. The amount of " tips " they have is something wonderful, supplied by their " gyps," I should imagine ; and the best thing one can hope for is, that these gentry may be paid by a percentage on their master's winnings, for in this case I think the perennial fountain of tips would soon dry up.

It is very curious to look down from the stand on to the outer ring just previously to the starting

of the race. You see nothing but a dense mass of closely-packed hats, and little puffs of smoke rising all over the mass, making it look just as if it was smouldering, and might be expected to break out into flames at any moment. One thing that makes Newmarket so enjoyable is that there is no need of dressing to within an inch of your life, as you have to do at Ascot and Goodwood. You see men in comfortable morning and shooting-coats, Norfolk shirts, or any other kind of loose and easy attire ; any one almost who appeared in a frock-coat and topper would be looked on with the greatest suspicion. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Many ladies do not appear here—about a dozen or so in the Jockey Club stand, and a very few in carriages, are all who attend ; but those who are present seem to enjoy the racing thoroughly, as they too are dressed reasonably, and are not in continual misery through fear of a shower, or that the splendour of their costume may be eclipsed by the superior elegance of a rival, as is too often the case on other racecourses. It is, indeed, a curious thing to notice how very few ladies or women at all attend ; even the wives and daughters of the neighbouring farmers are not present, though there are a very sporting lot of them in the district. In the morning, before racing commences, you do not see

any women at all about in the streets, with the exception of the few who keep the fruit and vegetable stalls in the main street.

I have mentioned previously the wonderful edibles offered for sale in the town; but those brought on to the Heath are stranger still, the chief of them consisting of acid-drops and butter-scotch. You meet vendors of these everywhere; and, stranger still, actually see grown men buying them. Whether they think they will bring them "luck"—and there is scarcely anything a regular "turfite" would not do if he thought it would bring him luck—or whether they imagine the taste of juvenile luxuries will restore the innocence of their youth, I do not know; but that they buy them and actually eat them is an undoubted fact. Apples, too, are sold; and once I saw a man selling prawns in the stand itself. Now fresh prawns for breakfast are very nice, and so is prawn-curry; but wind- and sun-dried prawns offered for consumption by themselves in the middle of the day are not very inviting, and I did not see anyone buy them. At the railway station also, when you are returning, you find a lot of women hawking ducks and chickens about, but I never saw anybody buy them. Indeed, it would be rather puzzling to know what to do with one if you did purchase it. You could

not open your trunk and put it in ; and if you did, I do not think it would travel well with your shirts, &c. ; and to sit with a dead duck in your lap the whole way back to down would be trying.

Most interesting it is to go in the early morning to the training-grounds, and look at the racers at exercise. Here you see them in every stage, from the yearling just being led about quietly with a lunging rein on to the adult racer taking his final spin, previously to competing for some stake, and a finer spectacle than this last cannot be seen : the magnificent animal in perfect condition, his satin coat, showing the play of the muscles underneath, striding along at his top speed, untouched by whip or spur, is a perfect picture of beauty. You see many people out watching the horses, some merely through fondness for horseflesh, but many of the genus "tout." How people can be found weak enough to believe in their "tips" it is hard to conceive ; for if a "trial" is properly managed, and the stable secrets well kept, not even the lads themselves know the weights the horses are run at, or even the exact distance, so the "tips" of these gentry must be the veriest guesses possible. They adopt wonderful disguises, under the fallacious idea that they shall not be detected. There is one con-

stantly to be seen got up as a clergyman of the Church ; and really, if you judged him by a passing glance, you would think he was some indefatigable pastor going to visit some sick member of his flock ; but if you looked closely at him, you would see that if he had a flock it would be uncommonly closely shorn. He might more correctly be termed “ a Baptist,” so often has he received the rite by total immersion in a horse-pond, stable-lads being the officiating ministers, and the frogs at the bottom his sponsors.

But there is “ a thorn in every rose,” and there is a very large one at Newmarket in the shape of a church, with a squat square tower containing a peal of the most abominable bells in England, I should think ; they are all about a semitone out of tune, and the effect is aggravating past description—far worse than the ding-dong-spat of the three bells you so often hear in old-fashioned village churches, where two of the bells have no relation in tone to one another, and the third is cracked. These wretched things jangle and clash for, I should think, half an hour every day about eleven ; and I find the idea among the aborigines is that they are playing a tune, but the effect of the performance on a musical ear is excruciating. But, apart from this, few pleasanter places can be found at which to pass

some days than Newmarket during a fine autumn meeting.

One word in conclusion. If anyone intends to bet at Newmarket, never take a Newmarket "tip" unless it is very strongly corroborated elsewhere; for the true Newmarket man firmly believes, in spite of all facts to the contrary, that no horse can win unless it has been trained there, and would rather back the veriest rip in existence hailing from headquarters than the best possible racer trained elsewhere.

KATE'S DAY WITH THE OLD HORSE

“YES, Kate, we are as nearly as possible ‘stone broke,’ as your brother would say. The time seems to have come, my girl, when ‘honour may be deemed dishonour, loyalty be called a crime,’ at any rate in Ireland; and as we can’t make our tenants pay rent, we must go.”

The speaker was a massive-looking old gentleman with clean-cut, weather-beaten features, and a heavy white moustache. He had drawn his chair away from the breakfast table, and was still knitting his brows over his morning letters.

Poor old Lowry, like his fathers before him, had lived out of doors amongst his own tenantry all his life, with a joke and a half-crown for anyone who wanted them.

Almost all the harm he had ever done was to win a heart or two which he did not want, or drink a glass or two more than was good for him. For forty years he had paid rates and taxes, acted conscientiously as a magistrate, and filled several other onerous but unpaid offices for his Queen and such

as are put in authority under her; he had drunk her health loyally every night since he first learnt to drink strong drink, and would have "knocked sparks out of" anyone who had spoken disrespectfully of her before him; and now the property which his fathers had honestly earned was left at the mercy of a league of avowed rebels, and he himself was branded as an enemy of the people. Had he and such as he been left to defend themselves, they would long ago have put an end to these enemies of honest men and of the State, but their hands were tied. They were bidden to wait for help, but no help came. Lowry was still too loyal to murmur openly against the Government which had ruined him, but he had just realized that their name and their loyalty were almost the only things left to him and Kate, his daughter, who sat playing nervously with an empty envelope and gazing out blankly and sadly upon the old park she loved until her deep blue eyes filled unconsciously with tears.

But Kate was not the girl to indulge in tears when a difficulty had to be met, and in ten minutes she had mastered her emotion and was walking with her father to the stables, gravely discussing affairs with the stalwart old man, more like one man with another than like a young girl with her father.

"So the horses are to go up next week, Dad, are

they? It is a bit of a wrench to say good-bye to you, Val," said the girl, as she laid her hand lovingly on the neck of a great up-standing chestnut, "but you are good enough to find yourself a situation, my boy. Father, though, what about Joe? We could not let him go into a cab, and he is too old for anything better."

"True, Kate, and I can't bear to shoot the old fellow, and yet what are *we* to do with a pensioner now?"

"Shoot him! No, father, we'll keep the bullets for other billets. A loyal servant and friend like Joe has as much claim on you as your daughter has; and whilst we have bread and cheese we can find Joe in fodder. Poor old fellow, I believe he would rather eat his litter with us than old oats in a strange stable."

It was a pretty picture, let latter day æsthetes deny it if they will—the tall, strong girl, natural and unaffected, not a bit angelic, but very womanly, caressing the old horse, who lowered his head to meet her caresses, and shoved his honest old nose against her cheek.

And Kate was right. It *is* a hard thing that a horse who has risked his neck a thousand times for his master, who has never known fear or spared himself in that master's service, should be thought

only fit for a bullet when his limbs and wind begin to fail. We pension the half-hearted human servants, we destroy the whole-hearted beasts who have worn out their youth and strength prematurely in our employ.

"How are you going to keep Joe, if I let you try, Kate?"

"Well, father, I ought to be able to make a pound a month by needlework, Christmas cards, and so forth; there is a bit of land at the cottage, so that turned out on that in summer and not much worked in winter, Joe need not cost much to keep, and I'll groom him myself."

"And what would the London aunts say to that, Kate?" laughed the squire.

Kate put a hand trustingly on the old man's shoulder as she answered smiling, "The London aunts say a good many things, Dad, which I don't agree with, and you only pretend to, you know. Aunt Dorothy prefers her carpets to sunshine, at least she keeps her rooms dark all day for fear the sun should spoil their colours."

"I thought it was her colour which the sun spoilt, Kate?"

Kate laughed, and with a squeeze of her father's arm and a saucy nod, flitted off to see to some member of her animal kingdom.

Luckily for the Irish, they take trouble well, and though skinning is an unpleasant process, they soon get used to it.

* * * * *

Three months after the events recorded in the preceding paragraphs, Kate and her father were living at what had been their agent's cottage, a tiny house with stabling for one horse. The Lowry's agent was now Colonel Lowry himself, and his daughter (the best and straightest lady rider in Gonaway) had laid aside her habit as a souvenir of happier days.

At the Hall a rich Londoner had replaced the old squire (as his tenant), and a London young lady inflicted agony on the mouths of such horses as she rode, and never disgraced her sex by an after-breakfast visit to the stables.

Instead of the laughter of that tom-boy Kate, highly finished performances on the piano frightened the blackbirds off the lawn, and instead of jokes and half-crowns from a poor but warm-hearted native, the peasantry now received pamphlets on market gardening and threepenny pieces from an alien millionaire.

* * * * *

“Molly says they have just shot ‘the Laurels’

for the seventh time this year, and there's not a hen pheasant left on the estate."

"Never mind, father, it won't matter to us. Mr Preece will have some more down from Leadenhall Market or some such place next year; and, after all, they pay our rent for us, and we couldn't live without them."

"Pay the rent," grumbled the squire; "I could have done that myself, if I'd sold all the game, and never given a head to man or woman on the place."

"Then why didn't you, Dad?"

"Why didn't I, girl? Well then, it's just because I suppose I've always belonged to 'the stupid party,' thank God for it."

Poor old Lowry was a red-hot Tory, without any Liberal instincts whatever, a fact which sufficiently accounted for the mess he had made of his life. And yet, somehow, the men who dared still to touch their hats to this reprehensible old robber of the public lands, did so with a smile in their eyes more hearty than the smirk they gave to his successor, Mr Preece.

Since the first day we met her, a change has come over Kate. The grey-blue eyes are just as beautiful, but there is less sparkle in them; the lips are just as sweet, sweeter it may be, but the dimple has gone. In the last few months she has

seen more of the seamy and shabby side of life than she had even guessed at in the twenty sunny years which went before.

I don't think the squire has any suspicion of it, and Kate has neither mother nor sister to tell it to, but her poor little heart has had its stoutness tried a good deal of late. When Kate was queen at the Hall, gallant George Vernon, sometime captain of Hussars, and at present master of the hounds and Kate's very distant cousin, had remembered the tie of kinship to the bright young beauty quite as often as duty required. Now his visits were like angel's visits in number and, to the proud Kate, far less welcome.

George Vernon was no snob, but then Kate, the hostess at the Hall, the reigning queen in the hunting-field, and Kate without a horse to her name, in a cottage and out of the world altogether, were very different persons, and George unconsciously showed that he felt the change. Though man is fickle, perhaps George would not have allowed his admiration for his cousin to cool so suddenly had there not been attractions elsewhere.

Miss Preece (the daughter of the new tenant at the Hall) would have passed as a pretty woman anywhere. If lemon-coloured locks, an abundant

fringe, bright colour, and the full, tempting figure of a young Juno, make beauty, then Polly Preece was a belle. If reckless riding and a smart habit make a horsewoman, Polly Preece was a very Amazon.

True she had never had a fall; true her horses cost three hundred guineas apiece, and were clever enough to jump through hoops at a circus, even though they had ten stone of fair humanity hung on to their tortured mouths; and true, too, that though Polly laughed often (and showed in doing so as dazzling a set of teeth as ever disappointed a dentist), few people owed even a smile to any wit of hers.

But the Bruisers (as the men of the Gonaway hounds were called) voted her a right good sort, if only she would give them a little more time at their fences and not always pick the tenderest part of a man to jump upon.

George Vernon did the civil at first as Master. In a week's time he was her pilot, and in a month half a dozen of the Bruisers were sadly afraid that he would ere long be her husband, thereby robbing them of the greatest prize in the local market of matrimony and of the merriest bachelor in the hunt. As for George himself, he thought honestly enough that the Preece girl was "very good fun," but if he could have had her dollars without her he

would have been a happy man. Unfortunately, circumstances, especially the bills connected with the maintenance of a crack pack of fox-hounds, were beginning to impress upon him more and more the necessity for converting Miss Preece into a connecting link between himself and her papa's money bags.

This was, roughly, the state of affairs on Monday, November 2nd, 1885, the first regular meet of the Bruisers for the season.

It was a time-honoured custom that the first meet should be held at the Hall, and though the master of the house who had entertained them so often was there no longer, still the house stood and the custom remained.

* * * * *

"I suppose you would hardly care to go to the meet to-day, Dad?" queried Kate at breakfast.

"Not go to the meet, girl, after keeping the old tryst so many years, why not?"

"Oh, I don't know, only I thought you might not."

"What, because another fellow provides the sherry and is master at the Hall? Of course I don't like it, but providing he does not give the men Hamburg stuff, I'll go and be thankful to him for doing what I can no longer afford to do. Put on

a leather petticoat, little woman, and we'll run with them since we can't ride."

I think the old man struck the match to light his pipe a shade more viciously than was necessary, but he never winced, though he was perhaps remembering another 2nd of November when the little woman was yet unborn, and he himself on the best horse in the country was as good a man "as ever holloaed to a hound," and in one fair woman's eyes the best.

Suddenly he put down his pipe and called, "Kate."

"Yes, father."

"Come down again for a minute."

"All right, in half a second;" and almost as soon as she had promised Kate was in the room again.

"What is your will, sir?" said she with a little mocking courtesy.

"Why, child, I was thinking that you at any rate might ride to the meet. Your habit is packed away somewhere; Joe looked yesterday as fit as paint, and, as Tim expressed it, 'is brimful of consate.' I declare he has waxed fat and kicks, to the serious detriment of his old tumble-down box."

"No, father, if you don't ride, I shan't. If you run, so shall I."

"Do as you are bid, Kate, or rather, since you

never do that, ride if it is only half-a-dozen fences, just to please your old father, and to show that young woman at the Hall the difference between riding and being carried, between hands and paws."

Those who loved Kate best would always have been the first to admit that she had just "the laste bit of the divvle in her, God bless her," and hence it was perhaps that her father's diplomatic suggestion as to the eclipse of her rival brought the colour to her cheek and the light to her eyes.

"Do you really want me to, father?"

"Really, really, Kate, and now let us go and have a look at Joe."

* * * * *

I am ashamed to say how old Joe was. Like ladies, horses don't care to have their ages published on every house-top, and though they cannot lie for themselves on this important point, they have no difficulty in finding many to lie for them.

Joe was said to have been eight when the Lowrys bought him, and they had ridden the gallant brown for seven years. But eight is a queer age in a horse, as expansive and uncertain as the adjective "young" when applied to spinsters. At the lowest computation Joe was not less than fifteen, and a "vet." who wanted to buy him once pledged his

professional credit that he was twenty-six at least. Be this as it may, when an hour later he walked out of his loose box, he looked the very type and *beau idéal* of a twelve-stone hunter. From the carriage of his lean game head and trimly-docked tail, from the cheery snort with which he welcomed the fresh air, from the muscle on his square and massive quarters, from his hard, clean legs and full, bold eye, you might have fancied he was a six-year-old. A veteran strapper who had followed the squire from the Hall to the cottage, had spent an hour in dressing the old horse, and the squire's own hands had put the finishing touches to his toilette. Proud and gay the old rascal looked before his mistress mounted, but when she was in the saddle he gave one wild kick from mere exuberance of spirits and then trotted out of the yard, as old Tim expressed it, "for all the world as if he was tridding on eggs."

* * * * *

"Ye gods ! she is a dazzler ! Quite takes my breath away," said a shiny-hatted, faultlessly-breeched stranger from Dublin to a young local Nimrod ; "why, there are not half-a-dozen girls, even with the Meath, who have ventured out yet in Busvine's scarlet array, and here is a young lady in the wilds of Gonaway with a seat like a sack of

potatoes and raiment more magnificent than Solomon in all his glory."

"Fits her well for all that, and suits her style, milk and roses and that sort of thing, you know," replied the local, himself rather a captive to the fair equestrienne.

"Milk and roses! Milk and fiddlestick! Lemon and white I should describe her if she was in the setter class; but tell me, who is she, and has she any money?"

Needless, perhaps, to explain that poor Polly Preece was the subject of this irreverent banter, which in a measure perhaps she had deserved, for though a pretty woman in "the lady's pink" is a fair picture in a showy frame, she must not be hurt if she is a little stared at on her first appearance. And, indeed, Polly was not hurt. On the contrary she was flattered and in high spirits. Her new jacket fitted her to perfection; her horse was well-mannered and easy to ride; she had drawn the attention of every one to her sweet self, and she felt for the moment that "blues" or fear had for her neither existence nor meaning.

A large group of late comers was still standing in the doorway and on the broad steps of the hall, chaffing each other or pledging their host in a last stirrup cup.

"What is that madcap daughter of mine about now?" exclaimed old Preece, as Polly broke from the throng and sent her horse along over the turf at a rattling gallop, followed by two or three of her admirers.

From the steps to the line of elms no fence was visible to the spectators, and yet before reaching the avenue, three of the horses rose at something, and the fourth and his rider seemed to be swallowed up.

"Good heavens! young Voyle is down in the Park fence," cried Preece; and sure enough the exquisite from Dublin shortly after emerged from the abyss, his hat crushed, his breeches smirched, and his temper somewhat soured by the loss of a good horse.

"Really, Mr Preece, you must curb that young lady's pluck; she will break her neck some day if you don't take care," suggested an elderly friend.

"Break her neck," growled old Preece; "it isn't pluck, it is folly; wait until she has had a fall; you'll see she will learn better."

Kate had been sitting a quiet spectator of this little episode, though the old horse had backed and fidgetted with impatient desire to join in the fun.

As Polly rode back from the fence she caught

sight of Kate, and with that sweetness which women show to rivals they detest, wreathed her face in smiles and laid a caressing hand on Joe's mane.

"Oh, Kate, how glad I am to see you out! I wish, dear, you had let me know that you meant to come. You might have ridden Dennis or my bay. I am afraid your dear old horse is almost past work now!"

"Doesn't look like it, does he, Miss Preece?" retorted Kate, as Joe champed his bit and pawed the velvet turf. Polly hated to be called Miss Preece by Kate, and would fain have passed for her bosom friend; but Kate unfortunately chose her own friends for herself, and Polly was not of them.

"Cousin Kate is a rare believer in the old horse," remarked George Vernon as he joined the two girls.

"Yes," assented Polly, "your cousin is a very antiquary; she likes everything that is old, and only what is old. She has even spoken slightly of this miracle of Mr Busvine's. From politics to petticoats, Miss Lowry is a Tory, like her father!"

"I admit all you say, Miss Preece, and glory in it. I do prefer old habits, sartorial and otherwise, to any others."

There was a deepening in the blue of Kate's eyes as this word-play went on, which looked as if she was more than half in earnest.

"Well, I don't agree with you, and for the sake of example I will back my young chestnut against your veteran in the field to-day," quoth Polly.

"Oh, come, Miss Preece, that's hardly fair," broke in George; six against twenty-six, isn't it, Kate?"

"It may be, Cousin George, but the old horse can quite take care of himself, thank you. Yes, I'll match my old one against your chestnut, owners up; who is to be judge?"

"Would you mind, Captain Vernon?" pleaded Polly.

"No, certainly. What are the stakes?"

"Oh, say a pair of gloves; I am too much of a pauper to make the bet in dozens," replied Kate, and so the bet was made.

* * * * *

The morning was a bright one, with a touch of hoar frost on the grass, which none but the early risers saw.

At 11.15 the rime had all gone, and the air was as "balmy as May," the sun shone brightly, and men's spirits were as brilliant as the weather.

But the first draw was a long one, and a blank. The second was like it, and again no noisy note

replied to what Captain Pennell Elmhirst calls "the huntsman's tuneful pleading."

Faces began to lengthen. A blank at Tod Hall had never been heard of in the memory of man. The gentlemen in velveteen who had taken a somewhat prominent part in the morning's proceedings had disappeared by noon, and men spoke disparagingly of the race which some sportsmen aver is a compound of policeman and poacher.

It was easy by two o'clock to tell the men who rode horses from those who only "talked horse."

The "customers" were all looking grim and silent; the men of the road were brightly conversational, and sat in groups discussing their cigars and whisky flasks at every point from which they could not possibly see, should the hounds slip quietly and suddenly away.

The little group near the corner of the covert had grown weary of waiting. The glow which follows a sharp trot to covert on your favourite hack, and the consumption of "just one glass" of orange brandy, had worn off, and the damp chill of a November afternoon had begun to pierce through the stoutest of pinks and to chill the gayest of hearts.

The horses had fretted themselves into a white lather with impatience, or stood with drooping heads and staring coats, mute witnesses to the chill which

had come with afternoon and hope deferred. Everything suggested that fox-hunting was an overrated amusement.

Little by little the hounds had drawn away from the Hall and its overstocked coverts, until now, at 2 P.M., they were thrown into a small outlying wood, where pheasants were never reared and rarely shot.

At last there was a doubtful whimper; then a hard-looking man in mufti (a local horse dealer) stood up in his stirrups and held his hat high above his head. A dozen keen pair of eyes saw the signal, and though no foolish halloa imperilled their chance of a run, the light and colour came back into the men's faces, and they forgot in a moment the miseries of the morning as they marked the lithe red form of reynard steal out of covert, and with a whisk of his grey-tagged brush, make off leisurely, with his head set straight for the stiffest line in the county.

By this time the first doubtful whimper had been caught up and repeated in fuller and more certain tones, and there was little need of the horn to call loiterers from covert.

One after another the beauties tumbled out in hot haste, hackles up. For one moment each seemed to dwell as he cleared the brakes, and then with a rush they gathered to where old Monitor had

the line under the lee of a grey stone wall, along which the whole pack glanced, swift and close packed as wild fowl on the wing, while the keen November air thrilled with the maddest, merriest music that ever made a sportsman's blood tingle in his veins.

The wild freshness of the morning, with its bright sunshine, had given place to frost, and men settled grimly down to their work with the conviction that with such a burning scent and an afternoon fox few would live with hounds to the finish.

The field was never a large one from the start. None but those who got away at once had a chance of seeing the run, for the first mile was ridden at racing pace over a lovely grass country, with nothing to stop hounds or men save low stone walls, over which they slipped without a rattle like the phantoms of a dream. Amongst those still with hounds at the end of the first mile were the two ladies and the master. Polly's red jacket had followed George Vernon as the needle follows the magnet—a little too closely, perhaps, for the comfort of the magnet. Kate had been in trouble on the right, her old horse, fresh and mad with excitement and out of temper with the long restraint of the morning, had got his ears laid flat back and the bit in his teeth.

For the moment the temperate habits of past years were forgotten, and poor Kate, with arms aching and powerless, felt herself flashing over stout stone walls at a pace which would have been dangerous over sheep hurdles.

Polly's chestnut, on the contrary, was behaving in a manner which would have done credit to the best horse in Galway or with the Heythrop, steady-ing himself at every wall and popping over with the least possible exertion to himself or risk to his rider.

And now five of the "pursuers" were in one field, grass beneath their feet and a fair stone wall without a gap in it in front.

All except Polly probably noticed the rushes which grew in tiny bunches beneath the wall, and guessed from them and from the sudden dip of the land that the take-off would be a boggy one.

In vain Kate tried to get a pull at her horse. On the left Vernon and Polly had got over with a scramble. One man was down, and a second felt that the roan was worth another fifty at least for the way he kicked himself clear of the dirt.

With a rush which would have landed him well on the other side of twenty feet of water, the brown went at the highest place he could find in the wall. Kate knew what must come, but hardened her heart and faced it. As the old horse tried to rise, he

stuck in the heavy bog. There was a crash ; for a moment everything spun round, and Kate was down with a stunning fall.

Had anyone seen her, of course even the run of the season would have been given up to render her assistance, but her only companions in this particular field had the lead of her, and the side walls hid her from other people's view, besides which Kate Lowry was one who had long since established her right to look after herself in the hunting-field.

For a minute or two the slim girl's figure lay prone and motionless on the damp turf, while her horse stood by, hanging his wise old head regretfully over the ruin he had made. Then the girl raised herself on her elbow, pushed the fair hair out of her eyes, and sitting up, looked into the old horse's wistful face with a half smile.

"You old fool, Joe!" she said ; "you ought to have known better at your time of life."

Rising to her feet, she leaned her head for a moment on her saddle, pressing her hand to her side as if in pain, and then backing her horse so that he stood close alongside the wall, she climbed slowly and with difficulty back into the saddle.

"I wonder how long we lay under that wall, Joe?" soliloquized Kate, as she walked him through a gap in the next wall ; "and I wonder, too, where

the hounds are, and if I must give it up and let that Preece girl beat me?"

Listening intently, she sat for a moment by the roadside, the old horse's ears pricked keenly forward. At last she thought she heard hounds running, it seemed, to her right. Without a moment's hesitation she turned Joe round, and, sobered by his fall, that mud-besmeared veteran popped over the wall as cleverly as a cat, only to be reined up short as he lit, for there, streaming over another wall, were the whole pack, going as keenly and as fiercely now as in the first three fields. With them were only two horsemen, the master and the man in mufti.

As the three joined forces, George noticed for the first time his cousin's white face and muddy garments.

"Why, Kate, where have you been? Not hurt, I hope?" and though the words were curt and simple, the expression in his face was less careless than it might have been.

"No, thanks; more mud than bruises, I think. Where is Miss Preece?"

"Rolled off in the only piece of plough in the county, and seems to have taken root there," laughed the ungallant M.F.H.

"No damage done, I hope?" said Kate.

"Hurt? No. Her clever chestnut put his feet into a furrow and stumbled, *la belle* Polly rolled off, and though we put her up again, she seemed to have had enough, especially as she believed that you had given up the chase some time since."

"Oh, indeed," laughed Kate, a little grimly. "You see hers was her *first* fall; it makes a difference."

And now the conversation dropped. Each of those three riders had his or her hands full for the time. The fox in front of them was, indeed, a straight-necked one. Save for the one turn which had given Kate a second chance, he had gone straight as the crow flies since the find. Save for a check of a short five minutes, the hounds had run almost as if they were coursing him, and it was already a full half-hour since the find, and the spire of Kempford church was now visible on the right. At the back of Kempford village was a well-known drain, in which more than one stout fox had found safety. For this reynard seemed to be making, and to judge of the frequency with which each of the three horses rattled their walls as they skimmed over them, his pursuers were hardly likely to get there even if he was.

But between the Kempford drain and him there

ran the deep and broad stream of the Cheln, unfordable, and rarely, if ever, crossed (save by a bridge) in the annals of fox-hunting. As the three neared the river, they were (thanks to a lucky turn) in the same field with the hounds.

"By Jove, there he is," cried the "dealer," breaking silence for the first time, and there, sure enough, dragging his gallant but dragged person up the bank opposite was poor "pug," in full view of the pack. No otter hounds ever took water more savagely than did old Monitor and his comrades, almost whining with impatience to close with their gallant foe.

"Kate, for God's sake, don't try it," cried Vernon.

It was too late; the old horse had already been driven in, and the first woman who ever swam a horse across the Cheln was already battling with the stream, her lips hard set, her grey-blue eyes full of fire, and her whole face recalling vividly for the moment, in spite of its natural softness, the stern outlines of those ancestors whose war-worn profiles adorned the long galleries of the Hall.

It was a difficult swim, but old Joe's limbs were borne up bravely by the brave heart within, and it was not till long after the dripping habit had been dried that it occurred to Kate that, like Lord

Cardigan, she had forgotten that she could not swim.

The M.F.H. and his cousin were now the only two left with the hounds, and in front of them rose, perhaps, the worst fence in the Gonaway country, a stiff stone wall, the stones all firmly morticed, and on the top a row of rough-edged slabs set on end like the teeth of a saw. Under the take-off side ran a deep, little stream, nowhere less than six feet wide, and even at that the banks were undermined and unsafe.

The cousins were alongside in the field which this mantrap bounded. Every atom of colour had left her cheeks now, and her lips were white with pain. Had George's whole heart and mind not been in the chase, he must have seen, and insisted on her returning home. As it was, he only said, "They've killed him, Kate; I must have it and save a bit of the best fox I ever hunted." And if hounds' tongues could be believed, they had indeed at last pulled the gallant old fox down, though the rugged piece of masonry before alluded to hid the pack from view.

"Is there no other way, George?"

"No, don't you follow me; go back by the lane and I'll bring you the brush if I can save it.'

So saying, the master turned his horse and set himself at the place where the wall looked lowest. Kate had been bred in a hunting country, but truth to tell, her heart hung on that leap.

"One thrust to his hat and two to the sides of his brown," and then he shot to the front, seat steady and hands well down. Right bravely the horse rose at the leap, but the bank broke as he rose, his knees caught the coping stone with a jarring thud, and man and horse lay stunned on the other side.

To the wild cry of "George, George!" no answer came back, and then it was for the first time that poor Kate knew how irretrievably her heart had been lost to her dashing cousin.

To gallop to the gate was useless, though she essayed it. The gate was six barred and locked, moreover, the wall and its guarding stream still ran on beyond the gate. Kate had lost her head and her heart, but not her pluck.

"Just one more try, Joe," she whispered, and with a rush that seemed born of the last energies of a gallant heart the brave old horse faced and cleared the coping stone. Many fresh horses might have cleared that wall; but they talk of that leap still in Gonaway. Nearly five feet of hard stone and a biggish brook in front was no small feat, they

say, for a tired horse, even with bonny Kate Lowry on his back.

Under the wall lay the grey, stone dead, and under him George Vernon, his white face looking up at the sky now darkly bright with the frost of a November evening.

How Kate got her cousin from under his horse and watched the colour creep back to his bronzed cheek, no one knows, for she kept these things in her own sweet heart, but it was late in the evening that a party sent out to search met an old woman leading along a donkey cart, on which lay poor Vernon, his leg and collar bone broken, while beside him sat a lady, her face white with pain, which her colour alone betrayed, and after them came a yokel leading old Joe, and followed by the best pack in Ireland.

The day had one more event in store for the villagers of Kempford. Arrived at the inn, Kate Lowry did what no Lowry had ever been known to do before—she fainted. On recovering, she shamefacedly exclaimed, “I think I must have broken something when I fell at the beginning of the run, and it has hurt me rather ever since.”

She had broken something. No more nor less than three ribs; but if she had refused a humble prayer made to her three weeks later she would

have broken something more important — “the heart” of the M.F.H. for Gonaway, who to this day may be heard to declare “that there is no pluck like a woman’s, and I ought to know, for I married the pluckiest girl in old Ireland.”

SOME CURIOUS HORSES

BY CAPTAIN R. BIRD THOMPSON

I FANCY that I must have possessed as curious a lot of horses as has fallen to the lot of most men—occasioned partly by the fact that friends who, whenever they had a particularly queer-tempered or vicious brute, were in the habit of either presenting it to me as a gift, or offering it for a mere song; partly through my having bought several with peculiar reputations; and, lastly, I think that it must have been predestined that I was to be the owner of these sort of animals. My first pony, which my father bought for me when I was six years old, was purchased from a gentleman who parted with it because it always ran away with his children and kicked them off. The pony, however, never did this with me, although playing the same trick with almost everyone else. One thing, I petted it very much, and it really was fond of me.

It was a wonderful pony. What its age was I

do not know, but it was in my possession for twenty-two years, and was said to be an old one when my father bought it. Its death at last was brought on by eating a quantity of half-ripe apples. Having been turned out into an orchard, a sudden gale in the night knocked down a great many of them, and the old fellow ate such a lot that they brought on an attack in his stomach, which killed him in a few hours.

I had one very queer-tempered horse given to me. A friend, a great hunting man, wrote and asked me to come up and lunch with him and talk over some intended "meets." I accepted the invitation, and went up to his house. After lunch he proposed a stroll over his stables. As we were going over them we came to a horse in a stall quite away from the rest of the stud. My friend asked me if I did not know it. I, however, did not recognise the horse, as it had a longish coat on, and he then told me that it was one that a Mr Goldsmidt had given 500 guineas for about a year previously, and, finding it too much for him, had presented it to my friend. "Now," said he, "I will give it to you, and if you will not have the animal I shall send it to the kennel to-morrow." I, as may be imagined, was greatly surprised, as the horse was considered to be one of the best hunters

in England. Its legs seemed quite fresh and generally all right, so far as I could see. Thinking that I could send it to the kennel as well as he could, if it turned out useless, I accepted the gift with thanks.

Just as we were leaving the stables, my friend dropped back, and I overheard him say to a groom, "Take that horse down to Captain T——'s stables *at once*." Well, thought I, there is some screw loose—and a pretty big one I fancy.

On reaching home, late in the afternoon, my groom met me and said, "The new horse has come, sir; but he seems a pretty queer one." I went round to the stables at once, and there I found the horse looking very wild, his eyes almost standing out of his head, and he himself as far back out of his stall as his halter-rein would allow, though not hanging on it. I went up and began to talk to him, and at length he seemed quieter, and his eye did not look so wild; at last he let me hold his head-stall. I then patted and coaxed him as much as possible, and gradually got him up into his stall. Just as I had succeeded in this, the groom came with the evening feed. Directly the horse saw him, he began to make a roaring noise, more like a bull than anything else. Fortunately I had hold of his head-stall, or I think

he would have damaged the man. On loosening his head, thinking he would feed quietly, he snapped at the corn just as a terrier does at a rat, catching up a mouthful and then dropping it. I at last managed to slide slowly out of his stall, and left him for the night.

The next day I sent for some men to clip him. They did their work very well, but I subsequently heard that they declared they would never touch him again ; they would as soon clip a Bengal tiger.

Soon after this I had him out for a ride and discovered another of his amiable peculiarities. Whenever he met or passed a conveyance of any sort, he kicked out at it most furiously ; I suppose that some time or other he had been struck when passing something. It was a most dangerous trick, and took a very long time and great patience to overcome. However, at last I cured him.

Another peculiarity that he had was his great objection to my mounting him when in uniform. He did not mind it in the least when I was once in the saddle, and took not the slightest notice of my sword rattling against his ribs ; but he could not bear the act of mounting. I used to have him blindfolded at first, but afterwards, by always petting him, giving him sugar, &c., he lost his dislike to being mounted.

One morning, sometime after I had had him, my groom sent in word that the new horse had kicked his stall all to pieces, and, on going into the stable, I found he had done it and no mistake. There was scarcely a piece of the strong oak partitions bigger than one's hand; they were literally smashed. What made him do it I cannot imagine; he never tried it again. Strangely enough, after all this violent kicking, the only place where he had marked himself was a little bit not bigger than a florin on his near fetlock, where he had knocked off the hair.

One trick he had of which I never cured him. This was when out hunting. When taking the first fence, on landing he invariably kicked up as high as he could. Often and often when he seemed particularly quiet I thought, "Well, old fellow, you surely won't kick to-day": but, as certainly as the fence came, so surely did he kick—but never except at the first fence.

As a hunter he was perfection, and never, with one exception, refused a fence with me. On that occasion I felt that I was not certain about taking it. I was late at the meet, and the hounds had slipped off down-wind, so my only chance of getting the run was by a lucky nick in. I was riding to a point that I thought they would make to, and had

just jumped over into a lane and was riding at the fence on the opposite side, when I caught sight of a man in pink riding down the lane. I turned my head quickly to look at him, and the horse feeling the slight motion I suppose, and thinking that I was going to join the man swerved round, but, on my turning his head to the fence again, he took it at once. This was the only time he ever swerved at or refused a fence.

I lost him in a very curious way. I was out hunting one day when the going was very deep and bad, and we were galloping through a piece of plough. At the top of the field was a cut quickset hedge and a gate. I rode at the latter, thinking that the ground would be sounder there, and the jump would not take so much out of my horse. When I got to the gate, he rose at it, and then made a tremendous effort to draw his hind-legs out of the deep mud. Not meeting the resistance he expected, his hind-legs flew up so that he landed on the other side almost in a perpendicular position, his tail brushing my hat, and for a moment I really thought he would fall over on me. However he came down apparently all right and cantered a few yards into the next field, when he made a most extraordinary flounder and stopped. I jumped off at once, and found him sitting up, just as you often

see a dog, with his fore-legs straight out and his hind ones at right angles to his body. In a minute or so he rolled over on his side. I tried to get him up, but he did not move. A veterinary surgeon who was out, seeing that something was wrong, came up, and, on examining him, declared that his back was broken. And so it proved to be: the violent jerk of his hind-legs had done it. Of course I had to have him shot at once. I was very sorry to lose him, as he was such a perfect hunter.

Another of my horses I bought from the farmer who bred him; he was a black, nearly thorough-bred, and a very fine-looking animal. I had often seen his owner riding him to market and other places, nearly always at a hand-gallop, and the horse never appeared heated or even blown. I had also seen him in the hunting field. After purchasing him, I tried him over some fences that had been made for the purpose in one of my fields, and he jumped fairly for a young one, so I took him out with the hounds when they met in an easy country. The first thing I put him at was a small gate; but this he would not have, so I set him at a low, dry stone wall, which he cleared well. So he did also the next two or three fences; but on coming to another he did not make the slightest

effort to jump—simply ran at it, and blundered through it somehow. The next fence, in spite of my shaking him up and letting him have the spurs pretty smartly, he did in the same way, then cleared one fairly; but on my putting him at a bar-way he never rose at all, but went full tilt at it and smashed it to bits. I was a good deal disgusted at these performances, but tried him another day, a friend saying I did not rouse him sufficiently. Anyhow, this next time I did so, but it had no effect. He scrambled his fences in just the same way, never, however, coming down. After this I lent him to my friend (who thought I did not ride him with sufficient resolution) for a day's hunting by way of a trial; and the horse signalised himself so that I determined to part with him. He had gone on in his usual way until we came to a brook about twelve feet wide, but deep. I jumped it all right, and looked back to see how my friend fared. The brute of a horse did not attempt to clear it, but actually galloped into it, turning a complete somersault, so that he actually scrambled out on the same bank he came from. Fortunately my friend got his feet out of the stirrups, feeling that the animal would not clear it, and was flung on the opposite bank, merely getting his legs wet. After this I sent the brute to Tattersall's, and got a very

good price for him on account of his make and shape ; in fact, you could not see a finer-looking hunter nor ride a greater impostor.

Another curious animal I had I bought quite accidentally.

It was at Newmarket during a July Meeting, and one morning I strolled up to the paddocks where the sales were going on, expecting to see there a friend I wished to meet. On walking up to the ring, a very fine horse was being led slowly round ; it was evidently quite quiet, went round the ring like any old sheep ; but scarcely any bids and those very low ones, were being made for it. Catching the auctioneer's eye, I gave a bid, and, not seeing my friend, walked off. Just as I had got to the gate one of the auctioneer's clerks ran after me and asked where they should take my horse to. I denied having bought one ; but the man persisted, so I went back and found the horse had actually been knocked down to me, the auctioneer telling me it was really cheap for dogs'-meat at the price I had given. The horse was sent down to my trainer's, and, meeting him later on in the day on the course, he said, " Well, sir, so you bought Vulcan ? " I told him how it occurred, at which he was much amused, and, on my asking him some questions, told me he was a splendid

horse—wonderfully bred and looking all over like galloping, but that he never would try. He had no pride, he said, and would lob along in the ruck as happily as possible. He had been in lots of stakes, but no one could do anything with him; he would make a waiting race with a mule they said.

It was a most curious case. The horse seemed to have every requisite of make, shape, and action, and yet could not be induced to try to race. It appeared to make no difference whether the rest of the things were in front of him or if they came up and passed him; he kept on about the same pace, and would not try to race. If punishment was attempted, the horse showed such evident symptoms of temper that it was not safe to continue it.

At last he was used by the trainer as a hack, and, in his absence, taken out by the head lad, when out to superintend the gallops.

I had almost forgotten his existence, when one day I received a letter from my trainer asking me to come down to Newmarket the next day by a mid-day train, when I should find a hack waiting for me at the station, and that he would be at the New Stand, on the race-course side, to meet me, as he wished me to see a trial.

I of course went down and met my trainer at

the Stand. After a little conversation, we cantered off to the place where the trial was to come off, and stationed ourselves at the spot fixed for the winning-post. He then gave a signal, and shortly I saw four horses galloping towards us and keeping pretty fairly together until perhaps about two lengths off, when one of them came away from the others, leaving them almost as if they were standing still. "Well," I said, "of course I don't know what the weights are, but that is as hollow a thing as I ever saw. What horse is that?" I asked. To my intense surprise, he said, "Vulcan." "How in the world did you get him to gallop?" said I. "That's rather a curious story," replied the man. "We found it out quite by accident. I was away last week for a day or two looking at some very promising yearlings in Dorsetshire, and Jackson (the head lad) took out the string, riding Vulcan as hack. They were exercising on the Bury side, and a boy who was going rook-tending passed by. Boy-like, when he saw the horses cantering, he blew his horn—to try to give them a start, I suppose. None of them minded it except Vulcan, and he clapped his legs under him and bolted off with Jackson as hard as he could go. When I came back next day he told me about it, but did not seem to think anything of it. However, it struck

me differently, so I went and found the boy and told him to come to me the next day with his horn—which he did. I took the string out, and told the boy to blow as we passed him. He did so, and Vulcan again bolted clear away, past all the other horses. So I felt sure I had found out how to make him go, and to-day if you noticed (which I had not) a boy blew a horn as they passed him and the horse again came away, though the others did their best, and he was giving them from 2 lb. to 4 lb.”

“You certainly have found out how to make him gallop,” I said; “but I don’t see how you are always to have a trumpeter about after him.” “I think it can be managed,” he replied. “I want you to enter him for the Handicap Steeple Stakes at the next meeting. He will only have a feather to carry, and at the time of the race, if you could be with the boy about the T.Y.C. winning-post, and, as the horses come by, tell him to blow, it won’t be noticed in the least.”

The horse was duly entered and I performed my part, and he won with consummate ease. The scene afterwards in the Birdcage when I went in to see him weighed was most amusing. Everybody was rushing up to me to find out how he had been treated; the most wonderful stories were set about

as to the quantity of whisky and port wine that had been administered to the horse, but the facts were as I have stated. He won in the same way and with the same ease in July behind the Ditch. After this we tried him without the horn, and he went fairly, so I put him into a selling race, which he won, and I sold him for a very fair price. I did not hear much of him afterwards, but believe he got back to his old tricks.

Another horse that I bought I knew to be a reprobate when I purchased him. He was a very fine racehorse, and had run well in the Derby—fourth or fifth, I think—and afterwards won several very valuable stakes ; but in some of his last races he was severely punished, and this quite upset his temper. He became savage ; then he was operated on and turned sulky, and at last developed a curious trick (no one seemed to know exactly how he managed it) of getting rid of his jockeys, nearly causing the death of his rider on two or three occasions. He was sent to Tattersall's to be sold, with various other "weed-outs" from his owner's stable.

I bought him thinking that he might make a steeplechaser, as rogues on the flat often develop into good "'chasers."

Being anxious to find out how he got rid of his

riders, a day or so after I had him I ordered him to be saddled, and, mounting him myself, I took him into a thirty-acre field of light plough, thinking, if I got a fall, it would not hurt there. I wanted to find out what he could do, telling my groom to watch carefully and see what his manœuvre was.

Well, I just walked him round the field several times, and he went as quietly as possible ; then I trotted him, and still everything was pleasant, and I began to think that the change of scene and course had produced its effect. Next I put him into a canter. At this pace he did not go quite so well, and evidently was looking out for something ; but at last he appeared to have settled fairly into his canter. Then, catching hold of his head, I just touched with the spur to make him gallop, when, without a moment's notice, I was sent out of the saddle like a stone from a catapult. When I got up, the brute was trotting away in the opposite direction to that in which I had been riding. I very soon caught him, and going down to my groom, asked him what on earth the horse had done. I need hardly say the man had not seen him. Of course, he said he fancied he heard someone calling just then and looked round ; the fact being that, seeing the horse go quietly at first,

he thought it was all right, and never took the trouble to watch.

As I was determined to find out the trick, I made my groom mount him. The man rather funk'd it, and said he had no spurs on ; so I gave him mine, and he mounted and went off. However, his reign was not long. Starting in a canter, he tried to gallop the horse, and touched him with the spurs, whereupon the brute shot out a fore-leg and spun round on it just as if he had been a teetotum. Of course, the man flew off, just as I had done. However I saw clearly that he would not bear the spur, and this seemed to be the secret. I mounted him again, without spurs, and rode him round and round for a considerable time, and got him to gallop by degrees, but in a very sulky way. If I attempted to rise in my stirrups, or even move my heel towards his side, I felt he was preparing for his dodge ; however, I did not give him a second chance.

After this I rode him regularly every day for an hour or more in the plough, and, finding he was not touched with the spur the horse went fairly freely. Next I took him out with my groom, riding a steady old hunter, and tried him over some small plain fences on a ground I had for schooling horses. He took to the work at once, and became very clever, and, as it was quite clear

that his temper would hinder him from being a 'chaser, I rode him with the hounds, and a finer hunter never existed; but I never rode him with spurs, and always had to remember not to touch him with my heels. If I moved them towards him I felt him begin to screw up; but he never required pressing—he was so very free and fast. He never, however, forgot his old tricks, and a very favourite amusement of the youngsters in the district was when they met anyone who was bumptious about his riding to offer to bet him that he would not gallop a certain horse round a paddock three times. Then they got me to lend them my old friend. It is quite needless to say that no one ever did succeed in sitting him three times round, as they were sure to rise in their stirrups and touch him with the spur, with the invariable consequences.

I sold him at last to a man who had often seen me ride him, and who envied him for his great speed, having warned him that he would not bear spurs. However, he would have the horse, and took him into Leicestershire, where he went very well I believe.

The best horse I ever had must have been predestined to become my property, so singularly did I meet it and ultimately purchase it.

I went one day to St Pancras terminus to meet

a friend who was coming up by one of the Midland trains. Getting there before the train had arrived, I was wandering about the station, to pass away the time, when I saw a string of horses being unloaded, and amongst them there was one that had been unboxed and was standing as quietly as possible by itself not the least startled by all the noise and clatter. I glanced at it, and thought it a fine-looking animal; but just then, my friend's train coming in, I joined him, and we went off together.

In the afternoon I was going down by a train from London Bridge, and when I walked out on to the platform, curiously enough there was the same string of horses being boxed to go down to a large firm of dealers in the South; there too was the same horse that I had seen at St Pancras, standing as quietly as possible waiting her turn to be boxed. I went up to look at her, and admired her very much. She was a dark-brown, and seemed to have very good legs and feet, though I could not see much of her, as she was all clothed up and legs bandaged; but I had not much time to look over her, as my train was ready, so I got in, and, for the moment, never thought anything more about her.

Some short time after this I had a letter from a large firm of horse-dealers, telling me that their "show day" was to come off next week, and asking

me to come and look through their stables. I did not want another horse, but thought I should like to go, and, on the fixed day, went. On getting to their place, after a very good lunch, they asked me to come out and go over the stud. When they opened the door of the first stable, strangely enough there stood, just opposite the door, the identical brown mare I had so admired on her journey through town. The dealer, seeing I was struck with her, insisted on her being stripped and brought out, in spite of my telling them that I did not want a horse, and that it was no use taking the trouble to bring her out. However, out she came, and I certainly admired her very much. To my surprise, she stood 15 h. 3 in., though until you went close to her you would not have thought her more than 15 hands; had four splendid flat black legs, well ribbed up, with a very nice head and well-laid shoulders and neck; her paces and action were excellent, and the dealers said if I could find a fault in her they would give her to me. I told them I did not want her, but as they were taking her in, thought I would just ask her price. Now, horses were very dear that season, and, as she was warranted a good hunter, excellent in harness and to carry a lady, and only four years old, I expected that at least £100 would be asked. To

my great surprise, they said £40. This, of course, choked me off at once, as I felt sure that at that price there must be some *very* "loose screw." Refusing all offers of her, I drove home.

In a few days after this I had a letter from the dealers begging me to have her, saying they would distinctly warrant her in every way, and that she would (of course) exactly suit me. I, however, again declined her.

A week or so after this I was told that a man was at my stables and wanted to see me, and, on going out, found that these dealers had actually sent the mare over for me to try. Well, they gave me a written warranty of the strongest kind, engaging, amongst other things, either to give me another horse or return the price if she did not suit me; and the end was I bought her.

Well, I had her out the next day and tried her, and found her as good as they said her to be—rather too high action for a hack, but very showy and perfect in harness; did not seem to know what shying meant; a most beautiful light hunter, and a very free goer. I thought I had found perfection, and everything went on well for more than a week, until one day, when I had come back from a drive, my groom sent in word to say that he wanted to see me at the stables. On getting

there, he told me that the mare would not go into the stable, and, sure enough, whenever he tried to lead her in she placed herself flat against the wall, and refused to move. We got her to the door at last, and she stood with her head just inside; and, though I tried to tempt her with corn, green-meat, sugar, &c., she absolutely refused to go farther.

At length, without any warning, she suddenly rushed in and round into her stall, with such violence that she nearly slipped up against her manger, and only recovered herself after a great struggle; and on the next day, when they tried to bring her out, she rushed out just in the same violent way. Here was the "loose screw" with a vengeance! but as I did not wish to part with her (for she was perfection with the exception of this trick), I set to work to try how to cure her of it. After some time we found that we could get her in and out of the stable by backing her, and this, though a rather awkward plan, was quite successful. I may say that after some years we got her to walk in quietly. The dealers had evidently kept an eye on her, for when they found out that I had hit on a plan by which I could get her into and out of a stable without danger they had the impudence to write and offer me £60 and *another*

horse if I would let them have her back ; and, on my taking no notice of this, actually wrote again and offered me £100.

Curiously enough, the mare would go into and out of a *strange* stable quite quietly, but directly she got accustomed to it began the rushing game.

This mare was perfect with that one exception, and did not know what fear was. If a gun was fired close to her, she would not take the least notice, and would allow a rifle to be fired under her nose, with the reins on her neck, and not even move her head.

I always believe that shying and all that kind of trick in a horse is the fault, in nearly every case, of the rider. Of course there are differences of temperament in horses as in men, but as a rule, what I have stated is the case, and I once had what I consider a remarkable illustration of it.

I was on the staff at the first autumn manœuvres in the Aldershot district in 1871, and one day I was riding back to camp after a heavy day, when I met a friend—a cavalry officer. We stopped to talk over the day, and just as we were parting he said to me, "Oh, I have a lot of horses eating their heads off ; if you would take one and ride it, it would save yours and do mine good." I of course accepted the offer with thanks, saying at the same

time, "I suppose it is a charger," and received (as I thought) an answer in the affirmative.

The horse was sent over to my stables that evening, and the next morning at 4 a.m., on going out of my tent, I found a very fine bright chestnut horse, evidently nearly thoroughbred, being led about by my groom. Well, I mounted him and rode off, and after duly inspecting the pickets and outposts, rode on to join the general staff. As I was going along I suddenly found myself on one of those dangerous pieces of ground that are to be often met with in the Aldershot district—all seamed with cart-ruts worn into the sand, varying from 2 to 4 feet in depth, and overgrown with heather, so that you cannot detect them until you are actually amongst them. Finally, finding where I was, I took my legs out of the stirrups, and put the reins on the horse's neck, knowing that I could not help him, and let him pick his way as best he could. He was doing this very cleverly, when suddenly a gun from a battery, concealed in a hollow close by, was fired (it was, in fact, the gun to tell the troops to be ready to move). My horse did not take the slightest notice of it, not even pricking his ears. Of course I thought that as he took no sort of notice of big guns he must be thoroughly broken, and used him as if he was—riding him with cavalry, artillery,

and infantry, taking points, and doing everything that pertains to a staff officer's duties; and no horse could have done better or been more thoroughly steady.

At the end of the manœuvres I returned him to my friend with many thanks, and he very soon sold him as a broke charger for a long price.

Shortly after this I was dining with my friend at the mess of his regiment, and, after dinner, in the ante-room, I happened to remark to an officer, "What a very good riding-master and staff they must have to break in so young a horse so thoroughly." He looked rather amused, and replied, "I suppose you refer to Red Rover?" (the name of the horse). I said, "Yes." "Well," he answered, "you broke him!" I was, of course, greatly surprised, but found it was actually the case. The horse had never been ridden with troops until he was lent to me, and I feel not the slightest doubt that it was the fact of his being on that dangerous piece of ground, and my having my feet and hands both loose when the gun was fired so unexpectedly, that gave him confidence. I could not have influenced him in the slightest degree. Of course, if I had been on ordinary ground, and had seen that a gun was going to be fired, I should, naturally enough, have slightly tightened the reins

and felt his mouth and pressed my legs to his side, and thus have drawn his attention to the fact that something was going to take place. As I did not, he took the noise as a matter of course, and did not notice it; and so, through mutual ignorance, we had perfect confidence in one another. But there is a sequel to this. Some months later I had a letter from my friend, telling me that if I wished to buy the horse I might get him for almost nothing, as the man he sold him to gave an awful character of him as a charger. As the horse was in the same district I happened to be in, I went to see him, and certainly the groom gave him a bad character. I got leave to try him, and very soon found that his present owner must be a very irritable, nervous man. The horse had had his mouth so jagged about with the bit that he never kept his head still for a minute, and, if you told him to mark a flank, directly it approached began to switch his tail and tried to kick, having evidently had frequent digs with the spur to make him steady. Altogether the horse was quite spoiled for a charger through his rider's fidgets; and, as I did not care to take the trouble to try and break him again, I did not have anything more to do with him. But I think this was a striking proof of how a horse can be made and unmade.

SPORTING FOR MEN OF MODERATE MEANS

FOR your wealthy noblemen, or large landed proprietors, it matters little what sport of any kind costs them, whether in horses, hounds, shooting, fishing, yachting, racing, or coursing.

Yet very many rich men are the greatest screws possible—carrying out the old adage of “the more you have, the more you want.” Love of sport is one of the boasted and general characteristics of an Englishman ; but I am inclined to think that, after all, young England is not such an ardent sportsman or such a hard man as his father and grandfathers were. As a rule, they are more of the feather-bed and hearth-rug sort ; but this by no means applies to all, for I know many good and indefatigable men, and there are hundreds I do not.

Our forefathers were, no doubt, earlier than we are—that is, they did not, in spite of their hard drinking at times, turn night into morning as we do. They went early to bed, and got up early ; began hunting before daylight, and managed to kill

their fox as twilight fell. Their soul was in sport, and we love to talk and hear about the grand, generous, though illiterate old squires of a hundred and fifty years ago. Men who always stirred their ale with a sprig of rosemary, and drank posset before going to bed ; dined at one o'clock when they were at home ; smoked their " yard of clay," wore topboots, buckskins, and a blue coat with brass buttons—regular Squire Westerns, but perhaps a little more refined than that worthy was. But education—and that wonderful thing, " steam," which enables us to travel from one end of the kingdom to another in the course of a few hours—soon stamped the old country gentleman out. What should we think if we now saw the queer-fashioned coach, with its four long-tailed black horses, doing about five miles an hour ? Some of our London swells, who cannot stoop to pick an umbrella up, would fall down in a fit, especially if the inmates of the said coach were any friends or relations of theirs.

Yes, the good old days are gone by—passed for ever. Men now smoke their cigars, hunt and shoot for a couple of hours, and look with horror on the portraits of their ancestors with a pigtail, and whisp of white cambric round their necks.

Many, very many country gentlemen of a cen-

tury ago never saw London ; they might have heard of it, but it was the work of a week to get up, and another to get back, and a visit to London about once or twice in their lives was as much as many could boast of, and gave them food for gossip for years and years after.

Shootings in those days were not of much value, and a man might have had a great deal of sport for a very little money ; but now all is changed, though it is only within the last thirty or forty years that Scotch shootings have risen in value ; some moors that were rented then for fifty pounds per annum are now nearer five hundred.

Directly people found out they could get down to Scotland at comparatively little cost and trouble, the prices of shootings went up—and they will continue to rise. England is much wealthier than she was. Commerce is much more extended ; money is easier ; speculation is more rife ; more gold discovered, which I cannot see makes one iota difference ; yet in spite of all this, and the heavy taxes we groan under—many raised and “ thrust upon us ” for the purpose of maintaining a lot of hungry foreigners, who, by the way, have the pick of all the good things. Well, well ! that game will be played out before very many years are gone by ; there will be a most signal “ check-mate,” a “ right-about,”

and the usual "Who'd have thought it?" "Knew it was coming," "Always said so," and so on. But to my mutton. Despite of the heavy price of things, heavy taxes, heavy rents, the Englishman is still a sportsman to his heart's core. If he does not make such a labour of it as his forefathers, he loves it just as well; his hounds and his horses are faster—he is faster, in many senses of the word; his guns do not take half an hour to load, and his pointers or setters can beat a twenty-acre field of turnips in something less than four hours; in fact, in many places dogs are going out of fashion, and the detestable system of "driving" coming in. I hate a battue, and call it sport I cannot, and never will. It is true I go to them occasionally, get into a hot corner, and have the "bouquet"—but still I cannot call it legitimate sport.

The man with moderate means must give up all idea of Scotch shooting, unless he goes very far north and gets some of the islands that are difficult of access; then it may still be done. Wild shooting, in many parts of Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall may be had at reasonable prices: thirty years ago ground—and good ground—could be got at sixpence an acre; now it is eighteenpence and two shillings.

Very fair rough shooting may be rented in North

or South Wales for about threepence an acre, and it is here, or in Ireland—which I shall presently touch upon—that the man of moderate means may have both shooting and fishing.

In the first place, house-rent is cheap in Wales; in fashionable spots, of course, it is not; but those are the very places a sportsman must avoid: he must leave fashion, youth, and beauty behind him, and go in for sport, and sport only.

Having found a house and ground, he must then get a good keeper and dog-breaker.

Here he exclaims, “Ah! a keeper! here’s the commencement of expenses!”

Patience, my friend, and I’ll tell you how your keeper shall pay himself, and put money into your pocket as well.

Of course, with wild shooting or any other you will want dogs; and for this purpose I recommend setters. Of course I presume you are a sportsman, and know all about it, for it would never do if you did not. You must also, if you possibly can, get ground where there are plenty of rabbits—these are what pay; they cost nothing to keep, and are no trouble—every good rabbit is worth nearly a shilling to you to sell.

Your setters must be of a fashionable and first-class strain; you must have three or four breeding

bitches ; and the produce of these setters will not only pay your keeper, but your rent as well. You must advertise your puppies to be sold, and keep yourself before the public by constant advertisements. Your keeper will break at least four brace of setters for you to sell each year ; and these dogs, according to their goodness and beauty, will be worth from fifty to a hundred guineas a brace, and even more. So you will not only be able to pay your man, but a good part of your rent and expensès as well : but you must go systematically to work, and make it a business combined with pleasure. You must understand that good and trustworthy keepers are like angels' visits, few and far between—but still they are to be had ; and when you have one, regard him as the very apple of your eye, and never let a few pounds stand in the way. If you have a large extent of ground, a man who understands his business well will break more than four brace of dogs a year—aye, double the quantity, but it is better to have fewer done—and done well ; get a good name for having the correct article, and you will always be able to dispose of more dogs than you can breed or break. Destroy all the crooked and weakly pups, keeping only those that will make braces, or any others that are really handsome. You can also break a couple of brace

yourself—that is, if you have temper and patience. February is the time to commence with your young dogs. You can keep them at work for six weeks or two months; by that time good fishing will be in. I care not to commence fishing too early.

One of the first things you must do is to put up a good serviceable kennel, where your dogs can lie dry and warm. It must be well drained—if possible, with a stream of water running through it. You need not go to any great expense, but it must be *well paved*, and constantly hot-line washed, to keep it sweet and wholesome, and the ticks and vermin under.

I will not here give any directions how they are to be made, because that depends a great deal on the place you have—the space, convenience, and so forth—but wherever you build them, let there be a good large yard for the dogs to run about in. Let the benches they lie on fold back against the wall, so that you may wash under them; and made with a flap in front, that the dogs, when tired, cannot crawl under them, which they will very often do. Benches are generally made in bars three inches wide, with an inch space between each, to let all the dust, small bits of straw, &c., through. Your dogs must always be *well bedded*—if straw is expensive and difficult to get, good dry fern will

do very well. In Wales and Ireland I always had a lot of this cut every year at the proper time, stacked and thatched. *Your kennel must be kept scrupulously clean and washed out every morning.*

Feeding is a very important thing, and must be judiciously and regularly done, and always at the same hour; but as every one has his own ideas on this point, I will say no more about it.

The place, of all others, for good wild shooting and fishing is Ireland. Here a man with moderate means may have all he wants—cheap house-rent; taxes few; living at much less cost than in England, and sport to his heart's content. It is, I admit, a wild life; but then it is a very pleasant, happy one.

The sea-voyage is nothing: those splendid steamers which run from Holyhead to Kingstown cross in a few hours, and you hardly, unless there is heavy weather, know you are at sea.

For the man whose heart is in sport, I know of no place so well adapted as Ireland. Wild ducks, snipe, grouse, and capital woodcock shooting; hares, rabbits, partridges and pheasants; all that you want is the ground properly looked after.

Wherever you go, if economy is your object, you must never attempt hand-reared pheasants; the cost of feeding is very great, and, as I have often and

often said before, a hand-reared pheasant, killed in December, costs little less than half a sovereign. Near a covert, if there is rough ground, it may be broken up, and barley or buck-wheat sown; this must not be cut, but left standing for the birds to go to whenever they are so inclined. This is a very inexpensive way of feeding. They are very fond of small potatoes, but these will do for your pigs.

What you require in Ireland is plenty of poultry of all sorts; a couple of Kerry cows, which may be had for little money, and a good sort of pig—some of Peter Eden's breed; fellows that are fattened at comparatively little cost. You must have cows—or be able to get buttermilk somewhere—for your puppies will not do without it.

There is no great sale for dogs in Ireland, but they may always be taken over to England, and sold at the proper time—in June or July. Numbers now go to America.

But there are many other spots, if you choose to go farther afield. There is very decent shooting to be got in France, and there are always Government forests to let.

Were I a young man, the place of all others I should go to again would be to Hungary. Sport of all kinds is to be had there; but this even has

been found out, and many English reside there now for boar and stag-hunting and shooting.

But in England, if you watch your chance and have agents on the look out, you may occasionally come across a good bit of shooting at a moderate figure ; or you may take a good manor, and do as a great many do—that is, have so many guns to join you. If you hire on your own account, either in England or Scotland, you can charge the guns anything you like for shooting and board—that is, anything in reason, and that they are likely to pay. You may then get your own shooting at little or no cost ; for there are many men who will pay a hundred for a month's good sport. They are in business, or in some profession, and cannot spare more time.

A man who has time, is really fond of sport, knows something about it, and goes the right way to work, can get both his shooting and fishing at a very moderate rate.

Many imagine it is necessary to have their brace of breech-loaders, and a lot of useless and expensive paraphernalia. One gun is all that is needed, except you have wild-fowl shooting. You must have a gun for that, either for punt or shoulder, according to the shooting.

A large quantity of dogs that are not wanted,

and are utterly useless, are often kept. For a moderate scope of ground, two brace of setters are quite sufficient, unless you are breeding dogs. Then you must, of course, have your brood bitches as well. I should have mentioned, it will be a great saving to you if you keep a first-rate stud dog. You will not only have his services, but you can advertise him as a stud dog; and he can form one of your working team likewise.

I must impress on my readers that puppies can hardly be kept too well. They must have little or no meat during their puppyhood, but plenty of milk and oatmeal, the latter always to be well boiled. Feed them three times a day for the first three or four months, and twice a day till nine months old. After that one good meal a day is sufficient.

A large volume might be written how to keep and feed dogs, on kennels, &c. This has often been done before; but things are now altered, and we must keep pace with the times.

I have never been able to afford an expensive shooting, and being abroad from the time I was twenty-one till I was middle-aged, I never had the chance; but, coming over to England every year, as I did, and shooting in all parts, it enabled me to know the localities, and where shooting at a reasonable price was to be had.

It is a large house and servants that swallow up one's income. A bachelor sportsman only requires a sitting-room and a bed-room, with his tub in some corner or outhouse close at hand.

There is nothing I like more than a real sportsman's den. There he has his guns, his rods, his different sporting paraphernalia, his pipes, his cigars, his powder and ammunition, and everything handy. As I am writing this I can see all my traps around me. I am rather proud of my sanctum. I have a place for everything, and everything in its place. My books—of which I have some hundreds of volumes—are before me. On one side of the wall are all my fishing things; over the mantelpiece, on racks, are my guns, and a goodly collection of pipes; in a three-cornered cupboard all my ammunition, and some hundreds of cartridges; in another cupboard are cigars, and odds and ends; in another a lot of nets, and a sort of fixed washing-stand; two luxurious old-fashioned arm-chairs on either side of my fire-place, into which I can pop and take a smoke when I am tired of writing. And at this present moment there are three setters and a couple of Dandie Dinmonts curled up on the hearth-rug before my fire; but my dogs are always clean in their habits; if not, they would not find a place in my room.

The rain is pattering against my windows, and it is a wild wet night; but still I am contented, and looking out for to-morrow, when I am going to have a day's rabbit-shooting, and beat a favourite snipe marsh.

I like to have my dogs about me, although I am not a single man, and have boys as tall as myself. Yet my dumb animals are companions to me—shooting alone for so many years in vast forests and thinly-inhabited countries, and often far away from friends and civilised life, has made me somewhat lonely in habits.

It sometimes makes me laugh to hear some men talk on sporting matters. I have often been trudging home late at night, wet through, or in a heavy snow-storm, with my tired dogs "at heel," when others have had a good dinner, a skinful of wine, finished their third glass of toddy, are beginning to talk rather thick, and find their cigars won't draw. I was obliged to content myself with a cup of sour cider, black rye-bread and eggs, and up and away before daylight again. Certainly I need not have done so; and sitting here, before my comfortable fire, I think how soft I was. But young men will be young men; and it was my love of sport that made me lead the wild and solitary life I did.

But there is no occasion for any one to do as I

did. I have gained experience with years. I do not think I should ever have given it up but for one reason. One night I left Quimper in Lower Brittany, and walked down the river (it was a tidal one) to a favourite spot for ducks. I had on my mud boots, and was well wrapped up. I got to the spot I intended, and there I lay waiting, lying down on a bit of board, with my famous black retriever Di beside me. It was bitterly cold, and I took a nip every now and then from my flask. If it had been full, which it was not, there would not have been more than a small wine-glassful in it, for it went into my waistcoat pocket; but, little as it was, that and the cold made me drowsy, and I fell asleep. I was awakened by an icy feeling under me, and my retriever tearing at my coat. I found the tide was coming up, and I was in six or eight inches of water. My poor dog was in a terrible state. I made my way to land, which was not more than fifty yards from me; but I was in such agony I could hardly get on, and, to make matters worse, it began to snow heavily. However, I managed to get to the road, and into Quimper; but I was laid up four months with ague, fever, and rheumatism, and never left my room during that time. Luckily, it was at the fag end of the season.

On another occasion after this attack—the next year—I was woodcock shooting with a friend of mine—an Englishman, now dead and gone. A better sportsman did not exist. We had got into a flight of woodcocks, and we had killed nine couples and a half, and were just on the point of returning home, when I was seized with ague again. We were about eight miles from Quimper at the time. My poor friend carried me three miles on his back before we could get a cart to take me home; but I soon recovered from this attack. I once in a day killed forty-four woodcocks, and on another occasion twenty-five. I had many narrow escapes and adventures. In my book of “Over Turf and Stubble,” there is a full and exhaustive account of sporting in France, and how you are to go to work, with a list of places where sport is to be had, and what you require. Woodcock and snipe shooting is not so good as it was, in consequence of the eggs of the former being taken and eaten, as our plover eggs are, and also from the ground being more drained. Still there are spots and haunts where they are to be found and killed in numbers. I once killed sixty couples of snipe in some paddy fields abroad.

As regards fishing, the man of moderate means must not think of a river in Norway or Scotland.

He must be contented with trout and general fishing; and the place for this is, no doubt, Ireland. There is very fair fishing in many parts of England, but for real sport go to Ireland. The white trout fishing is superlatively good there; so is the pike fishing. I know of a place now in Ireland to let—about five thousand acres of mountain, with eight or nine lakes, a beautiful river, with good pools, in which there are salmon, and white and brown trout. The fishing on the lakes is very good. In some of them the trout are small, but there are any quantity. It is in a very wild, lonely spot—four *Irish* miles over the mountains, and nothing but a herd's hut to go to when there. The shooting, grouse, hare, snipe, and cock, and a few partridges, was very fair. All this was to be had on lease, or by the season, for £20 per annum, and is now, I believe. Had I remained in Ireland I should have taken it, and put up a little place of two rooms, or added a bit on to the herd's cabin. But I think I should have made a little crib on one of the islands of the lake; there is a beautiful site for one. Here no keeper would be required; merely a Jack-of-all-trades. No lady, unless she were a good walker, could get up to this place, for the mountain is difficult and in places boggy; but could ride it on a pony. I used to enjoy my visits there. Sit-

ting on a three-legged stool before the bright turf-fire of a night, with my pipe and whisky and water, talking of my day's work, I was thoroughly happy. A small boat would be requisite on all the lakes, and a larger one for the big lake, by which I proposed to build a cottage. I could have done all this at very little expense, as there was plenty of stone.

There is no necessity for the fisherman to be bothered with a lot of expensive and useless tackle ; and as to flies, if I do not make them myself, I always buy them of local men, who know what are required. They tie them beautifully in Ireland, and know the required colours.

There is capital fishing in Lough Corrib, Galway. I had a small yacht there of ten tons, and many a fishing expedition I have had in her of a bright, warm summer's day. I sometimes had great sport with the perch, which run to three pounds. I have hauled them in, when we have come across them, *sculling*, as fast as I could let out line and pull it in. There is a great deal of shooting and fishing to be had in this way.

There is also great fun with the lake trout, which run very large ; so do the pike and eels. I always used to set night lines for the latter. Great quantities of ducks, too, are to be got on Lough Corrib.

There is capital fishing and shooting to be got at Killaloe, County Clare. I have had rare sport there. It is by going about and making inquiries that I have always been able to have good sport, and find out favoured spots for woodcock and snipe.

Hundreds of men are taken in by answering advertisements, which set forth the fishing or shooting in glowing colours—how miserably have they been deceived! You may depend the only way is to go over the ground yourself with a brace of good dogs, always taking the *contrary* direction which you are told to go. If you cannot spare the time, let some one do it for you that you can thoroughly trust.

I remember once a gentleman taking a salmon river in Norway, paying, of course, in advance; when he got there the river was dry, or nearly so. On expostulating with the agent, and demanding his money back, he was told that the proprietor really could not be answerable for the water, and that he had better stop till rain came, and that, probably, the fish would come with it.

A man in these days cannot be too sharp in taking either shooting or fishing; how many are "done" in hiring Scotch moors! They answer a flowing advertisement, take it haphazard, pay their money, and when they get there find there are no

grouse or deer either. This happens year after year, and yet, with these facts before them, many will not take warning.

Hunting I will not touch on, because that is an expensive amusement; but I can say this, my hunting never cost me a farthing. I used to buy young horses, make them, and sell them at good prices. But a man must not be only a good rider, he must be a good judge of a horse as well.

I know many men who hunt, shoot, and fish, and their amusement costs them little or nothing.

Now a few words as to yachting. That we all know is a very expensive amusement too; but even this is to be managed—of course not in the style of very many of our noblemen. I knew a man who bought a schooner of one hundred and twenty tons, and laid out some money on her besides; this yacht he let for three months during the season, and did so well by her, that, in two years, he had his purchase-money back and something more to boot. The remainder of the season he used her himself. Still, a vessel of this size requires a number of hands, and it is a risk. He kept a small yacht for his own amusement as well.

A man with moderate means may have a great deal of pleasure out of a boat of fifteen or twenty

tons, or even less ; and if he chooses to make it his home, it will cost no more than if he hired lodgings and dined at home, or at his club. Supposing he does not like knocking about in winter time, which is not agreeable, he can always lay her up in some nice harbour, and still live on board. If he is fond of his gun, he can take her to many places and lay her up—where he can get shooting as well, always living on board—South Wales, Ireland, France, and many parts of England and Scotland. And besides sea-fishing, he may get other fishing in the same way.

At the end of the yachting season there are hundreds of boats to be bought at a very moderate figure, sometimes almost for nothing. For the purpose I have named, you want no wedge-like racing craft, but a boat with a good floor, good beam, and light draft of water, with summer and winter sails, in fact, a nice roomy seaworthy boat.

But in buying you must be cautious, and have some one with you who thoroughly understands the business, otherwise you may invest in a craft whose timbers are rotten, and the planking no stronger than brown paper ; there is nothing that one who does not thoroughly understand the matter is easier taken in with than boats.

Having now told you how shooting, &c., may be

got on moderate means, perhaps a short account of my little yacht I had on Lough Corrib, Galway, and what I did, may not be uninteresting.

After I had been a short time in Galway—that is, a couple of miles from the town—I found a very nice boat of about ten tons that was to be sold. I made enquiries, and discovered she was nearly new, and that more than a hundred pounds had been spent on her in making a cabin and fitting her out. I bought her for *eight pounds*, spent twenty more on her, and had the most complete little fishing and shooting craft I ever saw. I had a rack for my guns and rods, and lockers for all my things; there were places to put away game, provisions, and liquor, and a good stove, of modern contrivance, for cooking. This last was in my cabin, for she was too small to have a forecastle. In summer we cooked on shore, on the stones or what not. She was only partly decked—what is called a welled boat. Over this well at night there was a perfectly water-tight tarpaulin, which was fastened down by rings. In this well, which was a large one, my captain slept, and the other man nestled in the sail-room, which was right astern. I bought a brand-new dingy for thirty shillings, and was all complete; the whole affair costing me thirty pounds. As I was living on the banks of Lough Corrib, the boat

was moored close to my house, and from my window I could see her.

In this boat I used to go to all parts of the lake, which is forty-eight miles long, and ten wide in one place. There were several rivers I could get up, and innumerable little bays, and places where one could anchor for the night. On Lough Corrib, there are no end of islands, some of them large; it is said there is an island for every day in the year, viz., 365. There was capital shooting on some of these islands, and on many parts of the marshes, on the banks of the lake, I had leave to shoot. One marsh or bog was seventeen miles long, and three or four wide. Most of this country was undrained, and snipe were in thousands. It makes my mouth water to think of the snipe and duck shooting I sometimes had there, as well as wild geese; but I got ague and rheumatism again; lost one of my children, and the life was too lonely for my better half. We were away from home and friends, and as I was some three or four years over forty, I gave it up, reluctantly, I must say, and returned to the old land.

Lough Corrib is difficult to navigate, and you must have a man with you who knows it thoroughly, otherwise you will come to grief. My captain knew it well, and was a good sportsman into the

bargain. My old sailor, who had been all his life about those wild, desolate, and God-forgotten islands, "the Arran," was a rare fisherman. He always managed the night lines, and when we have been anchored at the mouth of the Clare Galway river for the night, of a morning the lines have been loaded with eels, some of four and even five pounds in weight. If we baited for them, sometimes we had large catches of pike and trout.

I think cross-line fishing, or an otter, is still allowed on the lake; but I never went in for this, you require a licence for it.

Of a night, at flight time in July, the young ducks—they were more than "flappers"—used to come up from the lake and marshy grounds in numbers to the cornfields, and we generally gave it to them hot, morning and evening; and in parts of the lake we used to get "flapper" shooting. It was endless amusement to me, roaming about on the different islands knocking over a few rabbits, or sometimes a duck or snipe. I always carried a ten-bore gun with me, shooting four drachms of powder and two ounces of shot. I never knew what was going to get up; occasionally I had a crack at an otter asleep on the stones. Sometimes a duck would spring when I least expected it; there was no knowing. In winter we were obliged

to be very careful, for the wind comes off the mountains in gusts and is very treacherous, and accidents soon happen unless you have your weather eye open.

There is some capital snipe and duck shooting on Lord Clanmorris's property, on the banks of the Clare Galway river. I do not know if it is yet let, or leave now given; but I think it is not let. The white trout fishing is first rate in Connemara, but what a wild desolate place it is! The salmon fishing is said to be very good in the Clare Galway river, but though I have seen plenty of fishermen on it, and there are no end of fish, I never saw very much done; it is a sluggish river, and wants a good *curl* on the water to get a rise.

As I have said, I have had some of the best duck and snipe shooting at Killaloe I ever enjoyed; but snipe and woodcock shooting depend a great deal on the season. Some years there are any quantity, another season comparatively few; it is the same everywhere.

The golden plover shooting is very good all round Galway, and if you know the "*stands*," that is, where they roost of an evening, you can always get two or three shots. I have seen killed on one of the little islands on Lough Corrib, at one shot, twenty-one, which were picked up, and I believe

there were one or two more that were not found.

There is good shooting and fishing about Cork, and Limerick as well ; in fact, all over Ireland it is to be had ; but remember, the nearer you are to Dublin, or any large town, the dearer things are. It is to the wild, desolate spots you must go for real sport, and if a man can manage to put up with such a life, all well and good. Several Englishmen bought estates round Galway, but I suppose they got tired of it, or were afraid of the little pot shooting that an Irishman occasionally takes at one, just "*pour passer le temps*," as they are, or were, to let.

I had capital sport in Lower Brittany, France ; there are plenty of woodcock and snipe in parts, and the living at the time I speak of was very cheap ; but, alas ! there is a railway now, so, of course, like all other places, it has gone up in price. In these days, it has become a somewhat difficult matter to particularise which are the best places to go to for sport. If you do not mind distance, Hungary is the place. If you want to be near home, Ireland or France.

Take my advice, as an old sportsman who has been at it all his life, and has now seen nearly half a century ; if you are a man of moderate means take your time in hiring a place, and when you

have found one to suit you, rent on a long lease, if you can; if you wish to give it up, it will not remain on your hands any time. Do not be inveigled into buying a lot of useless guns, rods, or sporting paraphernalia; a *real* sportsman does not require them.

I think I have now pretty well exhausted the subject, and told you how to go to work.

PARTRIDGE MANORS AND ROUGH SHOOTING

BRIGHT, beautiful, glorious June !

I have often been asked which of the four seasons I like the best ; my answer has ever been the same : " The hunting, shooting, fishing, and racing." One season I detest (the very name of it gives me the cold shivers)—the *London one* ; defend me from that ; for if there is a particular time which is calculated to make " Paterfamilias " miserable and more out of humour than another, it is that abominable period of shopping, dinners, evening parties, operas, theatres, concerts, flirtations, flower-shows, and the dusty Row, with its dangerous holes.

I hate the formality—the snobbism of the " little village." I begin to think Napoleon I. was right when he said we were " a nation of shopkeepers." I do not mind a good dinner, when I can get one ; but there is the rub, I never do get a good dinner ; the English do not know how to dine. After twenty years' residence on the Continent, I have come to the conclusion that John Bull is

miserably, hopelessly behindhand with our French neighbours on all matters pertaining to eating and drinking; but then I balance the account in this way—Mossoo is not a sportsman; and although he will tell you he is a “*chasseur intrépide*,” “*un cavalier de première force*,” he does not shine either in the hunting or shooting field.

But the French ladies? Ah, they can dress; they beat us there again into Smithereens.

I am not like a bear in the hollow of a tree, who has been sucking his paws all the winter to keep him alive; I have been enjoying most of our country amusements, and I may say the winter has passed pleasantly.

Of late years a deaf ear has been turned to hints thrown out “for a change of air, things wanted,” &c. Busily engaged in building, draining, planting, and so on, little time could be given by me to London festivities.

The last attack was made in a somewhat ingenious manner.

“Frederick, poor Alice wants her teeth looking at. I think she had better go up to town for three weeks or a month, and be put under the care of a good dentist.”

This was as much as to say, “We are all to go;” but I was equal to the occasion.

“By all means, my dear, let her go. My sister is there for the season, and will only be too delighted to have her; but as for my leaving the place at present, with all I have to do, it is an utter impossibility.” This was a settler.

Somehow or other I begin to feel more lively as spring comes on. As a rule, about the middle of May I require a little spring medicine and a change of air. I find that the breezes of Epsom Downs agree famously with me, although my better-half always declares I “look vilely” on my return. Absurd nonsense! But I love my own quiet country life; its wild unfettered freedom. Away from the smoke, dust, and tumult of over-crowded cities—away from late hours and the unwholesome glare of gas, and I am happy.

A trip to Ascot and Goodwood with my family keeps matters all straight. A break now and then, and the quiet monotony of country life is not felt.

June, bright, beautiful, glorious June, has peculiar attractions for me. I am a shooter. I have not a grouse moor, for the simple reason that I cannot afford one; as my old keeper says, “It is master’s terrible long family and expenses that prevents his going into shooting as he would like.”

I am obliged to content myself with a partridge

manor; and, after all, I believe I like partridge and snipe shooting better than any other.

As I remark in my notes on "November Shooting," a friend of mine once said he considered snipe-shooting "*the fox-hunting of shooting*," and I am disposed to agree with him.

But, to return to June, from the 5th to about the 20th of the month, most of the forward hatches come off, and are seen basking and bathering round their mother.

But there are other hatches much later, for cheepers are often found in September quite unfit to shoot at.

I can only account for this, that the old birds have had their eggs destroyed in some way or other.

A partridge manor is not one quarter the expense of pheasants and coverts. The latter birds not only require constant attention, night and day, but feeding forms a very serious item. Pheasants are very costly, and only within reach of the rich man.

A partridge manor, to have a good head on it, though, must be well looked after, the vermin kept down, and your keeper with a sharp eye to all poachers and suspicious characters.

With a net at night they often sweep off the

birds wholesale ; but there is a very easy way of baffling them. Put sticks, about eighteen inches high, fifteen, twenty, or thirty yards apart, over the ground the partridges generally roost on ; these, as the net is drawn along, lift it up, and the birds easily escape.

It is a good plan to walk the fields of an evening with a brace of dogs, where you know they roost, and disturb them ; they may probably then take to the gorse, if any, potatoes, seed clover, and other safe ground.

In May and June I wage war with the crows, magpies, jays and hawks, shooting or trapping the old hen birds. Always kill the male bird first ; this is easily done by waiting patiently within shot, under cover of some tree or hedge where the nest is, which is generally built in some pretty high tree ; the hen will not desert if sitting hard, which you should allow her to do ; her death is then easily accomplished.

I never allow poison to be used, for I hold that a keeper who cannot destroy all vermin by means of his gun and traps is not worth his wages.

To have any quantity of game, it is better that you and your keepers should be on good terms with your neighbours ; they will do as much good as half a dozen watchers.

In May and June I always keep a lot of light broody hens ready to sit, for during the mowing season many partridge nests are cut out. The eggs are brought warm to me, and are instantly set under one of the hens.

The people who bring me in the eggs I invariably reward, but they are never encouraged or allowed to look for nests. Now, if these men were not paid a trifle, and a horn of ale given to them, they would not trouble themselves or lose their time. It would be very easy to put their foot on the eggs and crush them.

I am not an advocate for hand-reared birds, as there is some trouble and expense feeding them, and they do not grow strong and vigorous nearly so quickly as wild ones.

In one year alone, some four or five seasons back, I had six hundred eggs cut out, and over five hundred birds were reared.

Chamberland's food is the best for them, as well as for pheasants.

Of course the hens should be cooped. There is one thing you must be most particular about, and that is never to place the coops near an old bank, or where there are rabbit-burrows, for these spots are not only the haunts of stoats and weasels, but there is an animal quite as dangerous, who loves a

young partridge—the hedgehog. Many are of opinion that the hedgehog is harmless, but this idea I have proved to be erroneous (see “Over Turf and Stubble”—“The Hedgehog a Game-eater”).

My life has been spent following up the sports of the field and observing the habits of different animals.

The better way is, when your birds are young, to have them on your lawn, or in a field close to the house.

The coops must be closed at night, to keep vermin and cats (deadly poachers) from getting at them. It is a mistake to let them out too early of a morning. The drier the ground the better partridges do when young. As they get stronger, remove them with their coops to a potato or clover field, cutting a swarth through the latter to put the coops on and feed them. Place the coops twenty or thirty yards apart, or the birds, when young, will be straying into the wrong coops, and the hens will kill them, for they well know their own family.

I like a clover-field the best, because there is lots of cover, and they escape the sharp eye of hawks and other vermin.

In taking a partridge manor, ascertain first, by going over it *yoursel*f, if there is a fair head of breeding stock on the ground.

A wise "old saw" informs us that, "if you want anything done well, do it yourself;" and this I certainly advise in this case, unless you have a keeper you can really trust.

Do not take a manor that has too much grass land. There ought to be plenty of cover—turnips, clover, potatoes, rape, stubble, heath, &c., to insure good sport; for, if your ground is bare, although you may have plenty of birds, it will soon be impossible to get at them, for, as you enter a field, they will be away at the other end, and not having any cover to drive them to, you may follow them for hours and never get a shot.

A manor, too, should not be all low ground, or the enclosures too small. In such a country, good, fast and free-going dogs soon become cramped in their range and potterers. It is, in an enclosed country, impossible to mark the birds; and constantly getting over stiff fences not only tires you, but it unsteadies your hand, which will lose its cunning.

A partridge country should be as open as possible; then you can see your dogs work, which, in my humble opinion, constitutes the greatest charm of shooting.

Farms are often let at eighteenpence an acre, which is an absurd price—a shilling is quite

enough; but in many counties you can get as much good ground as you like at sixpence, but not near London. I hired, some two years ago, some capital rough shooting in North Wales at less than three-pence an acre, but it was too cold for my better half to reside in during the winter months. Whatever county you may fix on, avoid the red-legs; though a very handsome bird, and much larger than ours, they are not nearly so good for the table as the grey ones, being dry and tasteless; and they will spoil any dog, as they never take wing unless hardly pressed, but will run field after field. I destroy their eggs wherever I meet them.

In Norfolk, Suffolk, and particularly Essex, there are large quantities of them; they not only ruin your dogs, but they drive the grey birds away. I would not have a manor where there were any quantity of red-legs at a gift.

Having now told you how to go to work, I will, in the garb of narrative, which, nevertheless is true, show you how shooting, with other sport, may be had at little cost by those who love it and prefer a country life. I give it you as related to me by a very dear old friend of mine.

“Lenox and myself were boys at school, and afterwards at college together. A fine handsome fellow he was too, and doatingly attached to all

field sports ; he was not a rich man, quite the contrary, £300 a year at his father's death was all he had left to him, yet he managed to keep up a tolerable appearance even in London, and was engaged to one of the most beautiful girls I ever saw, and with a nice little fortune of her own.

“ Lenox was very fond and very proud of her, as well he might be ; everything was arranged, the day fixed, trousseau bought, and his pretty little cottage in Hampshire newly and tastefully furnished to receive its new mistress. But, lo ! a week before their wedding the young lady eloped with a nobleman, and they were married before Lenox knew anything about it.

“ He said little, but felt it deeply ; all were sorry for him, for he was a great favourite.

“ Shortly after his pretty little cottage was sold, and with his effects Lenox vanished mysteriously no one knew whither.

“ I went abroad, and was away many years, and, therefore, had no means of finding out where he had betaken himself to, or what he was doing.

“ After more than twenty years' absence I returned to the old land ; I had been satiated with sport of all kinds in different parts of the globe, and did not feel inclined to give the high prices asked for shootings.

“ My wife was somewhat delicate, and required a mild climate, so I took ‘the galloper,’ ran down to Plymouth, and from thence to Cornwall, determined, if I could, to buy a place there. I roamed about the country looking at different estates, and at last hit on a beautiful spot, with a nice house on it, convenient to the rail, and not too far from a good country town or schools.

“ One day during my peregrinations with the agent who had the selling of the property, I came on one of the most lovely little cottages I ever saw, placed on a slope, well sheltered from the winds, myrtles and fuchsias growing luxuriously and abundantly about, with its jessamine and honeysuckle covered porch, thatched roof, well-kept grounds, gardens, and brawling stream at the end of the lawn. I thought it one of the most fairy-looking little spots I had ever seen.

“ ‘ Whose cottage is that ? ’ I asked. ‘ It is not on this property, is it ? ’

“ ‘ Oh, no, sir, just off this land ; it belongs to Mr Lenox.’

“ ‘ Lenox,’ I breathlessly asked, ‘ Horace Lenox ’ ?

“ ‘ That’s it, sir—one of the nicest gentlemen in these parts, and a rare sportsman : it is not his own property, only hired on long lease, but he has done a deal to it ; three thousand acres of good

mixed shooting and capital fishing, with that cottage, is not dear at fifty pounds a year, is it, sir ?’

“‘I should think not, indeed. Mr Lenox is one of my oldest friends. I must go and call on him,’ which I did.

“‘I was told, on asking at the door, that he was out fishing, but would be home to dinner at six o’clock.

“‘Give him this card,’ I said to the respectable old servant who had answered the ring, ‘and tell him, I shall be here at six to dine with him. Is he married ?’

“‘Oh dear no, sir, master is a single gentleman. I don’t think he cares much about the women folk,’ she added, in her quaint Cornish way.

“The time hung heavily on my hands that day, so impatient was I to see my dear, valued old friend, and half past five saw me walking up the well-kept walk towards his house.

“As I approached, a figure issued from the porch, surrounded by four or five beautiful setters.

“A fine, handsome-looking man of three or four and forty advanced towards me, but quite grey ; there was no mistaking, though, his honest, beaming, well-known face.

“‘Frederick, old fellow,’ said he, grasping me by

the hand, 'this is indeed kind of you; hundreds of times have I wondered what had become of you, and if you were still in the land of the living.'

"And I the same, Lenox; by mere chance have I found you out. I inquired at all the old haunts when I returned to England, and could never learn where you were.'

"Then you are the gentleman, I suppose, that has been looking at the estate next to me, with a view to purchase?'

"Just so, Horace, *ecce homo*.'

"You could not do better, old fellow; I will put you in the way. I know every inch of the ground—rare shooting—but come in, and I will tell you all about it after dinner. Margaret, my servant, is in the devil's own way, for it is rarely I ever have any one to dine with me.'

"The inside of the cottage was just as pretty as the outside; his dining-room was a study for a sportsman: guns, rods, sporting pictures, &c., here hung all round the walls in endless profusion; it was the very essence of comfort and taste.

"Now, Horace,' said I, as I threw myself into one of the comfortable arm-chairs beside the open window, and he into another, 'tell me all that has happened since we last met.'

“‘That is easily done,’ he returned, drawing up a small table between us, with a bottle of claret on it, that sent its aroma all over the apartment as he drew the cork.

“‘You know how I was served in London?’ and his face assumed a hard, stern expression as he asked the question.

“‘Well, yes,’ I replied ; ‘but you have forgotten all that, Horace?’

“‘I have not forgotten it. I never can forget it ; it was a dreadful blow to me ; but I have forgiven it years ago, and am content with my lot. I left London in disgust, wandered about, and at last found this little spot. I have the shooting of three thousand acres of land—ten acres for my two cōws—I am as happy as possible. I breed lots of those,’ pointing to his setters, who were lying about ; ‘and they pay me well. I have poultry, pigs, shooting—the woodcock and snipe shooting is particularly good in the season—and fishing in abundance ; as good a cob as any man need possess ; deny myself nothing in reason, and never know what a dull hour is. But you will sleep here, for I have already found out where you were, and sent for your things.’

“I never passed a happier evening than I did with my long-lost friend ; we smoked our cigars

and talked of old times and old things that had happened years ago, passed never to return again.

“‘So your eldest boy is sixteen,’ he remarked, after one of the pauses. ‘Well, you must buy this place, Frederick, it is as cheap as dirt, and will pay you well. I will make your lads sportsmen—but I suppose you have done that yourself. I want companions now—no female ones,’ he added, laughingly, ‘your wife excepted; but some one to fish and shoot with me—the partridge-shooting is capital.’

“I was delighted with all I saw the next day; the place was lovely, and I was induced to spend a week with him. At the end of that time I was the purchaser of the property, and left to bring down my family and all my belongings.

“I have never regretted the step; though far away from the busy hum of the world, we are as happy as may be. Horace and I fish and shoot away; there is a calm quietness which I love. I, like my friend, have had some ups and downs in life, but the memory of them, in my country retreat, is gradually ‘fading away.’”

It is all very well for men who have long purses and large possessions to take expensive shootings; they can afford it and why should they not?

What might I not be tempted to do if I had the chance? I cannot say, and, therefore, I will not speculate.

To my young readers who are not *au fait* at all these matters, I would urge them never to be too hasty in deciding on taking any shooting. If they are not in easy circumstances, they must go very cautiously to work; but that fair partridge and general shooting is to be had at a moderate figure I can prove.

It is not generally known, but there are many parts of Scotland where there is first-rate partridge-shooting, and arrangements can be made to have it after the grouse-shooters have done and returned to England. I know several men who have made this arrangement, and get their sport at a very moderate cost.

But gadding about to places is not my form. I prefer to remain on the spot, and then I can always see how matters are going on.

In taking a rough bit of shooting, only one keeper is necessary; one good man will do the work far better than half a dozen bad ones. It is, I admit, a difficult thing to get such a man, but they are to be had.

I have written this paper solely for the guidance of those whose means are limited; the rich can do

as they like ; money is often no object to them ; but this I have known to be a fact, that the man who has only spent two or three hundreds, and often very much less, on his shooting has had far better sport than many of those who have spent thousands.

WHO IS TO RIDE HIM?

IN a remote and lonely part of Dorsetshire stood, in a beautifully-wooded park, a fine old mansion, Bradon Hall, belonging to George Bradon, Esq., who at the time I speak of was about eight-and-twenty.

He was one of the old school, as his father had been before him. Early in life he had been placed in a crack regiment of Dragoons, so he was not without a pretty good knowledge of the world for his age. Allowed a liberal sum by his father, he had never exceeded it; on the contrary, there was generally a fair balance at the end of the year in the hands of his agent.

He was a remarkably handsome young fellow. Bred up in the country, and left to do pretty nearly as he liked, it was not wonderful he turned out an adept at all sorts of sports.

A good cricketer, a still better fisherman, a magnificent shot, and not only the straightest but the best rider in the country; indeed riding was his forte. Not so with our late friend Artemus Ward

at "playing 'oss." With all these sporting accomplishments he was much looked up to in his regiment, and it was said that the man who could live with George Bradon in any country for twenty minutes was A1 in the pigskin.

Two years previous to the time I am speaking of, he found himself master of Bradon Hall; his mother had gone many years before.

The first thing he did was to sell out and come home, where he had ever since resided. All the men in his regiment had the blues when he left. "It was an infernal bore," Captain Swagger remarked, "to lose such a vewey fine fellow as Bwadon; he should like to know who the devil could bwoo such a cwawat-cup as Bwadon?"

At any rate George left, taking with him a magnificent gold snuff-box, a present from his fellow-officers, "which would be," as the lieutenant-colonel said, "a doocid nice thing to push about the dinner-table when he and his old friends of the regiment came down to hunt and shoot with him."

Some of them had been true to their word, and paid him a visit now and then in the sporting season. George was delighted to see them; it put him in mind of old times, and he was always glad to know how matters were going on in his old corps.

His father had been a great breeder of horses, and as George was just as enthusiastically fond of them, the old blood had been kept up; and with the exception of a fine specimen of an old English gentleman, who used to be daily seen walking about in a blue coat with gilt buttons, buckskins and tops, looking over his brood mares and colts, everything was the same as before. All the servants had been retained; they loved "Master George" too well to quit, nor had they been asked to.

Bradon, when with his regiment, had been the crack rider in it, and many a good stake had he won for that gallant corps. His services had always been most anxiously sought after, and mounts given him in most of the great steeple-chases of the day.

He was so cool and collected, no bustle or flurrying with him. A fine eye, a fine hand, a famous judge of pace, and strong at the finish, with a knowledge, that must almost have been born in him, when to ease his horse, force the running, or take advantage of any mistake. "On the whole," Lord Plunger, who was no mean judge, used to say—"on the whole I consider George Bradon the finest cross-country rider in Europe."

Bradon, though uncommonly lucky in his mounts, bore his honours meekly, and when he sold out and

came down to the old place to live, gave up steeple-chasing altogether. "He had so much to do, so much to attend to ; after a bit he would have another squeeze at the lemon, but really he must attend to his affairs first."

Repeated refusals damped the ardour of his friends, so at last they gave up asking him to ride, and he was left in quiet to pursue his own way.

Time went on, and such a person as George Bradon had almost been forgotten by the sporting public. One morning, some eighteen months after he had come home, going into the harness-room, he carelessly seated himself in the weighing-chair, and exclaimed to the old stud-groom, an heirloom his father had left him : "The same weight, Tim, I suppose—eleven three ?"

The person thus appealed to, standing on tiptoe, looked up at the dial as well as he was able ; for, in addition to being short and stout, he had a very tight pair of trousers, which seemed to have been made on him, and was moreover incommoded by a stiff white neckcloth, which threatened to strangle him. After having studied the dial for a few seconds, he started back, and blurted out in a voice of horror and amazement : "Can I believe my haged heyes, Master George ? You're twelve five, as I'm a miserable sinner !"

"What!" exclaimed George, jumping out of the chair considerably quicker than he had got into it, and throwing away the cigar which he had been indolently puffing—"what! twelve five? It cannot be; weigh me again, Tim."

The old man did so with the same result. "Oh, hang it!" said George, "the scale is wrong; it cannot be. I am not a bit heavier than I was; the same clothes fit me I wore two years ago. It's all bosh."

"I don't know, Master George, if it's all bosh or no," replied his old servant, "but the scale is right. Now lookee, sir, I've been fourteen stun nine for the last eleven years—not a hounce more or less. See my weight, sir."

George cast his eyes up at the dial as Tom wriggled himself into the chair.

"Yes," he said, "you are right—fourteen nine to a fraction, Tim. How the deuce I came to be this weight I have no idea; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that, instead of eleven three, my old walking weight, I am twelve five—sixteen pounds in less than two years," he muttered, as he sauntered away. "By George, I'll knock off that sixteen pounds pretty quickly, though. I detest fat people. An idle life will not suit me. I'll do Banting or something."

Tim looked after his young master as he walked away. "Well," he exclaimed at length, "Master George"—he was always Master George with the old servants—"twelve five; I'd never have thought it. There's something in his heye, though, that tells me he won't be that weight long. Although he is so cool he'll hunt every day the coming season, I'll bet my life; walk like blazes, and take physic enough to float a jolly-boat. I'll lay a sov," he remarked, as he slowly drew one out of a bag which he extracted from the depths of his capacious breeches-pocket, "that he is in his old form this day six months; dashed if I don't bet a fiver, or any part of it." But as no one was there to take him, he put back the coin, gave the neck of the bag a twist, and after a struggle managed to convey it to his breeches pocket again.

"What will my old woman say," he continued, "when I tells her o' this? she as nussed him as a foal, and said he'd never get fat like me. It's heart-breaking to think on. And there's Guardsman, the finest and fastest hunter in England, just coming six; how will he be able to carry him if he goes sticking mountains of flesh on like that?—he can't do it. He'll have to ride in a seven-pound saddle; but I don't let him do that, not if I knows it—he'd break his precious neck, and then I should

like to be told where Tim Mason would be, the old woman, and all the kids. No seven-pound saddle for me. I ain't a-going to have my boy a-smashing of hisself, and all because he will put flesh on. He's the only one left of the old stock ; it's time he married, and I hope he will. I'm almost afraid to tell the old woman. Twelve stun five !" he ejaculated, as he wended his way thoughtfully across the yard ; " it seems almost impossible."

" Tim," said his master the next morning, " this idle life won't do for me. I'm going over to France for three or four months. Would you like a trip ?"

" Me, sir ?" said the old man. " Why in course I should like to see them mounseer fellows eat frogs, and taste their brandy, too."

" Well, Tim, so you shall," replied George ; " and look here, we will take Guardsman and the gray with us. I will run them both at some of the meetings. Young Harry shall go with us ; he is a good rider, a light weight, and can keep his mouth shut."

" Yes, sir," said Tim. " He and I can do the horses as they ought to be done, and a little work now will do them good."

" Well," continued his master, " I'm off to London this afternoon to make some arrangements. Travel the horses down to Southampton, and meet me at

the 'Dolphin,' in High Street, you know. Be there on Monday morning; take saddles, clothing, and all you want. However, I need not tell you all this, or of the necessity of keeping our movements a profound secret."

"No occasion—no occasion, sir; I'll be there. Huzza!" he exclaimed, as soon as his master was out of hearing. "My words are coming true—racing again, by all that's jolly! This is a proud day for me. My boy will get into form again, I know he will. I should like to give him a leg up once more, and see him set a field." So saying he waddled off to inform his old woman, as he irreverently called her, of the change about to take place.

Some few days after this Bradon, his servants and horses, were located in a quiet little village in Lower Brittany.

"Well, Tim," said his master one morning, as the old stud-groom came in to say the horses were well, and ask what exercise they were to take. "What exercise?" said George; "why, I'll tell you. They are to go into regular training; they are in pretty good fettle now, but they must be better. We can do it in quiet here, without those confounded touts and fellows watching us, as they would have done at home. I should have had a scoundrel perched

up in nearly every tree in the park if they knew the game I was flying at. I have found out good ground here, and have permission to use it. Now, Tim, I am going to astonish your weak nerves. I need not caution you of the necessity of being silent. All the races, I find, are over in France for the year ; but, Tim, what do you think ? I have entered both the horses for the Grand Silverpool Steeple-chase. I did it when I was in town the other day."

"What!" said the astonished old man, "the Grand Silverpool?—my horses going to run for the Grand Silverpool? Oh, Master George, this is a joyful day. Guardsman will win it; he has never run, and if there is any justice he must be put in light. But who is to ride him?"

"Who?" returned his master. "For your life, Tim, not a word." And pulling him closer by the arm, whispered: "MYSELF!"

"You, sir?—but your weight, sir? Twelve stuns five and your saddle. Oh, no, Master George, that won't do."

"Now, Tim, you are a clever fellow, but others are as knowing as you. Look here. You see this weighing-chair; well, I bought that in London. Now weigh me."

The old man did as he was bid. "Why, sir," he

exclaimed, after looking at it, "only twelve stuns one ; four pounds lighter in less than a week, and without exercise."

"Or physick," continued Bradon. "Banting, Tim, Banting. No bread, no butter, no sugar, no beer, no saccharine matter of any sort ; plenty of meat, biscuits, toast, claret, and seltzer-water. That is my diet, and I never felt so well. If wanted I shall be able to ride eleven stone with the greatest ease."

* * * * *

In a luxuriously-furnished dining-room, some three months after the events which we have described, five or six gentlemen were discussing their wine.

"I cannot make it out," said a heavy-built man of five-and-forty or so ; "I have tried everything I know, and am not a bit the wiser than when I began. This Bradon is a most extraordinary fellow. I took the trouble of going down to Dorsetshire myself, and all I could arrive at was that Bradon was travelling. The servants knew nothing, or would know nothing. They were aware the stud-groom had gone and taken two horses and a lad with him ; that was all I could get out of them. Well, I went to the groom's house and saw his wife. She looked at me, and received me as if I had been a thief. It was a regular mull. That

Bradon has got two horses with him I am certain ; but what they are, and where they are, hang me if I can find out. I have tried every tout and stable in the kingdom, but to no purpose, so I have given it up as a bad job."

"Ah!" replied a fashionably-dressed and be-whiskered young man, "with all your cleverness and knowing dodges, you are bowled out, old boy. I know a little more than you. In my opinion George Bradon is training his horses quietly somewhere for the Silverpool. Both are well in, and the handicap has been accepted by him. He is a knowing hand, is Bradon. Now, I got hold of a letter written to a friend of his just before he left England. No matter how or where I got it, this is what he says." And opening his pocket and taking out a letter he read the following:—

Bradon Hall, Nov. 1st.

"DEAR JACK,

"In answer to yours of this morning I am sorry I cannot accept your kind invitation. I'm off on a bit of travelling, for I am not at all in form. Fancy my disgust on weighing myself yesterday morning to find I was considerably over twelve stone—so you see an idle life will not do for me. I shall go to France first; I may probably remain there for some

time. I have entered two nags for the Silverpool. I must engage some one to ride one ; it matters little who will get the second mount, as he will merely be wanted to make running for the one I declare to win with.

“ Yours, ever,

“ GEORGE BRADON.”

“ There !” he exclaimed, “ you see I know more than all of you. As for Bradon’s riding, that is an utter impossibility, for both horses are in at ten twelve, and it is equally impossible to get any good hand to ride them now, as all are engaged.”

“ By George, Fred !” exclaimed the first that had spoken, “ you have done wonders, but still I can make nothing of it. No end of odds have been offered against his nags for win or a place, and all have been eagerly taken up by the fellows of his old regiment. Why, Plunger alone stands to win over ten thousand. However, the horses are really coming into the betting, which they must not do. I must go down to the rooms to-morrow and give them such a tickler that will knock them out at once. It will not suit my book their taking prominent places in the market. By heaven ! if either of them was to pull through I should be a ruined

man, and others are in for double as much as I am."

"My dear fellow," put in a quiet, sly-looking little man, who had not yet spoken, "you should not do such rash things. Flukes do happen—not that it is likely in this case. I always wait till the last moment, and then come with a rush when I know things are pretty safe."

"Come with a rush," replied a tall, delicate-looking stripling ; "a pretty rush you made of it last year. You prevented my getting on, and not only put me in the hole, but every one else who attended to you."

"I could not help it, my dear boy," returned the other, with a crafty smile. "There is no occasion for you to ruin yourself too quickly, which you will do if you go on in such a reckless manner."

"Reckless manner !" passionately exclaimed the young fellow ; "why, you have had more of my money than any one else. Where others have had pounds you have had thousands, and now you talk to me of 'recklessness.' That is rather hard lines."

"I meant no harm," replied the other. "I only think it is dangerous to lay against Bradon's horses at present."

"No doubt you do," said the youth, a little pacified ; "but I do not mean to take your advice in

this case, and to-morrow, if I do not knock them out of the betting it shall not be my fault."

So it was settled between them all over their wine and cigars that Bradon's horses should be set at on the morrow and sent out of market.

They were attacked, and such extravagant sums laid against them that astonished every one, many of which odds were booked by Lord Plunger and a few others.

How this came about we will now explain. Lord Plunger, as before stated, thought George Bradon "the finest cross-country rider in Europe," and from a letter which Bradon sent in confidence to his lordship, he started for France. Here Bradon put him up to what was going on, and asked him to take some of the heavy odds offered against Guardsman "to win and a place."

"I won't have anything to do with it myself," remarked George. "You are a betting-man, Plunger, which I am not; but I will have one more shy, hit or miss. This will be my last appearance in public in the pigskin. I don't admire the way in which matters are carried on in the racing world now; and I am not going to risk my fortune and reputation in having any more to do with it. Of course there are honest people connected with it, but they—like angels' visits—are few and far be-

tween ; and besides, I know nothing of betting, but this I feel sure of, that such a horse as mine has not been out for years."

"That," said his lordship, "I am quite certain of, or you would not run him, and you are too good a judge to be deceived. You may depend on my doing all you wish. I shall be as silent as death on the subject, and not a word shall escape me. Let me see"—consulting his note-book—"I am to go as far as five hundred for you ; that ought to win you a handsome sum. I shall go as far for myself. You are to come to me four days before the Silverpool, and I am to take you there in the drag. That is the order of march, is it not ?"

"Exactly," said George. "Now let's have a cigar—you have plenty of time before you start. If you have any luck you will be sitting *chez vous* to-morrow evening."

It turned out as his friend predicted. The following evening Lord Plunger was comfortably lolling in his arm chair, thinking what a clever fellow Bradon was, and how secretly his own journey to France had been managed. This then was the reason Lord Plunger had taken some of the extravagant long odds that had been laid against Bradon's horse.

The morning of the Grand Silverpool broke bright

and beautiful ; though there had been a good deal of rain during the night, it had cleared off, and the day promised to be all that could be desired.

Bradon and Lord Plunger sat at breakfast in a quiet little country hotel some ten miles from the course.

“ Well, George,” said his lordship, “ so far, I think we have managed things admirably, not a soul knows of your being in England. They fondly imagine you are roaming about the Continent, and, to crown all, a rumour has got about that your horses will not start, and will be scratched at the last minute. It was a capital idea our coming down here last night.”

“ Yes,” replied Bradon, “ it was a famous dodge ; so they think the horses will be scratched, do they ? Well, it strikes me they will be slightly deceived about three o’clock to-day. Nothing can be in more beautiful fettle than the nags are, and if man ever had a certainty I have one in Guardsman ; although I have had no trial with him against anything else, he is, I know, a flyer, and a sticker. It will be heavy to-day, and no horse I ever rode goes better through dirt than he does. Bar accidents, I look on the Silverpool as landed.”

“ Bravo, bravo, George !” said his friend ; “ your heart is in the right place, and if we should pull it

off, it will be one of the grandest *coups* that has been made on the Turf for many a day. We will go in half an hour, if you like, to look at your nags. They are only three miles from this, at a quiet farmhouse; then we will return here, dress, and start at twelve in the drag."

The horses were inspected, and nothing could look more beautiful. Tim was in his glory.

"Yes, my lord," said he, in answer to a question put to him by that gentleman. "I am glad to be back in the old land, not but what the Moossoos was very jolly and haffable. Still, France ain't up to my notions of a sporting country; but we was in quiet there—no touts, no interlopers, or anything. Now, if I'd a-brought the horses down here by rail, every one would have knowed it; so they came in a van. It's a little more expensive, but by far the best and safest way. Not a soul knows they are here, and no one will be aware of it till I takes them to the saddling-post. I'm just going to start with them now. I've got a couple of boxes close by the course, so you must excuse me, my lord." And, touching his hat, the old man disappeared.

* * * * *

"Whose yellow drag and grays is that coming up the course?" said one of the occupants of the lawn in front of the Grand Stand. "I do not know it."

A dozen glasses were at once levelled at the object.

"Whose drag?" said the sly-looking little man we have alluded to before. "Why, Lord Plunger's. George Bradon is sitting on the box seat with him, and the rest are officers of his old regiment—I know their faces."

"By jingo!" burst out a score of voices: "then he is in England, and come to see his horses run, or scratch them. Now we shall know something."

"I wonder if he will be flattered when he hears the price his nags are at now?" said another.

"He will not care a rap," said the sly-looking little man. "Look out, my boys, there's something up, you may depend. Bradon, if his horses do go, has something pretty good, you may rely. I warned you all before. Now, I have not laid a penny against his nags. I have let them alone—till the last minute. But here they come."

"Hallo, Bradon!" burst out fifty voices. "What, in England! Come to see the nags beaten?"

"Well, I do not know," said George, shaking hands with some of them. "I hope they will be there, or thereabouts; pretty heavy the ground to-day. My horses can stand it, which a good many of the others cannot."

"Are your horses here?" said the sly-looking little man.

"Not yet," returned Bradon, "but they will be by-and-by. Old Mason has got them stowed away somewhere; but upon my soul I don't know where they are myself at present."

"Which shall you declare to win with?" asked the sly-looking little man continuing his interrogations.

"Oh, with Guardsman," said George.

"And your jocks?" put in another. "All the talent is engaged. A pity you are so heavy—why, you've grown immense. You will want a dray-horse to carry you soon."

"Think I have?" said George. "It's my coats, man. Every fellow looks large with a couple of top-coats on, and a huge-wrapper round his throat. I know all the talent is engaged. One of my lads will ride the gray."

"I say, Bradon," put in another, "I heard you weighed twelve stone five; is that a fact?"

"Yes," said George; "I put on sixteen pounds in less than two years—an idle life at home did for me."

"But, Bradon," persisted the sly-looking little man, "you say one of your lads is going to ride the gray. But Guardsman—*who is to ride him?*"

“ Oh,” said George, “ who is to ride him ?—why, I will tell you in one word, it’s a fellow you all know pretty well—MYSELF.”

Had a thunderbolt fallen amongst them they could not have been more astonished.

“ What !” they one and all exclaimed, “ you ? Why you told us not an instant ago that you weighed twelve stone five.”

“ No, my friends, I did not. I said, in answer to a question, that I *had* weighed twelve stone five. I told you I had put sixteen pounds on, but I did not tell you I had not taken it off. I walk ten stone ten now—Banting, my boys, Banting. And, listen to me, I shall win if I can, and I have a good chance ; but, win or lose, this is my last appearance in public. I’ve grown immense, have I not, old fellow ?” addressing himself to the one who had made the remark. “ I shall want a dray-horse soon, shall I not ?”

“ By G—,” said the sly-looking little man, “ I thought there was something up. The very best hand in England going to ride his own horse. I’ll be off to back him.”

The tall youth before alluded to turned deadly pale, but not a word did he utter as he walked away.

In less than five minutes it became known in

the ring and the stands that George Bradon was to ride his own horse. The utmost consternation ensued and many tried to hedge off their bets—but little or nothing could be done.

In the meantime our friend was quietly getting himself ready in the dressing-room.

The time at last came, the horses were saddled, and cantered.

“Here comes Guardsman,” cried the crowd, as the gallant horse came sweeping up the course in magnificent style, with the gray beside him.

“By heaven!” muttered a well-known betting-man, and one of the best judges in Europe, “a truly splendid horse—far better in appearance and style than anything here. Bar accidents, he will win in a canter, and if he does, I’m ruined.”

The betting and other men were positively paralyzed as Bradon and his horse came sweeping by, and it was allowed on all hands that no such animal as Guardsman had been seen for years.

“There, my boys,” said Lord Plunger, dashing into the ring, “there’s a man and horse for you. If he does not do the trick to-day I shall be very much astonished; and if he does, we shall both land a handsome sum, which you will drop.”

The anxious moment is at last come, the horses are in line—the old stud-groom, Tim Mason, stands

close by, with wipers, sponge, and bottle in hand. There is a curious nervous twitching at the corners of his mouth, the lips are dry and parched, and two small red spots adorn each cheek.

Not so with our friend. He sits his noble animal with confidence, ease, and grace, and as cool as a cucumber. Spying out his faithful old servant, he said, "What do you think of him, Tim?"

"Why, sir," he called out, "he's the best horse as was ever foaled; and if he don't beat that lot"—pointing with extreme contempt towards the line of horses—"Tim Mason knows nothing about it, and is jolly well d——d."

The word is at last given, and at the first attempt the lot are off.

"They're off!" shouted the hoarse voices of thousands, and streaming along were some thirty gallant animals striving for the pride of place—thousands, nay hundreds and hundreds of thousands, depending on the lucky animal that first caught the judge's eye.

The conspicuous colours of George Bradon—scarlet and white hoops—were in the extreme rear, but suddenly as they got into the grass land his gray took first place and made the pace a cracker.

"The gray in to pump the field," muttered the sly-looking little man to his neighbour.

"The fastest thing I have ever seen," said another. "By jingo, one, two, three down, and look, Bradon is taking quite a line of his own. By George, how well his horse jumps; it's a dead certainty."

"So I think," returned the other.

There is an awful tailing off now, the pace has told its tale; only eighteen or twenty are really in it. The dangerous brook and the double bank are passed, and the gallant gray who has set the field has shot his bolt."

"Well done, Harry," cried George, as he passed him. "Well done, pull him up."

The great water jump in front of the Grand Stand is approached again. "Here they come!" roared the multitude. "Who's first? Scarlet and white hoops," cried the excited thousands—"scarlet and white over the water first for money!"

George knowing the danger of a lot of horses, which he thought would be down at this, resolved to lead over it. Dropping his hands a bit the gallant animal rushed to the front, a length or so, and there he was kept.

The water is approached, the excitement of the multitude is something fearful as they sway to and fro to catch a glimpse.

"Magnificent!" burst from thousands of throats,

as Guardsman hopped over the formidable eighteen feet like a bird.

George turned slightly in his saddle to take stock. "All safe but three," he uttered ; "well, that is more than I thought would get over. Now, old man, I must take a pull at you. You have only done part of the journey. I can't afford to pump you yet."

"Guardsman has cut it," shouted a hundred voices as the gallant horse was pulled back.

"The cowardly brute !" bawled another.

"Don't you believe it," cried the sly-looking little man, in a shrill voice that was heard all over the place. "I'll take three to one in thous, and do it twice, that Guardsman wins, or is placed."

"Done," said the pale delicate youth ; "I'm on for twice." And the pencils went to work.

There was but one opinion amongst the countless thousands that Guardsman was the best horse in the race, and that, bar accidents, he must win.

The field has become very select now ; still what do remain in the chase go well.

The excitement is intense ; men are gnawing their lips and nails ; ladies are quivering with emotion and biting the tips of their delicate-coloured gloves.

Wild and staring eyes are everywhere. Men

eagerly grasp each other by the arm with a wild convulsive clutch as the horses clear each obstacle. Some stand stony and immovable, without the slightest appearance of interest. Little is known of the fearful beatings of their hearts under that cold, calm exterior.

"Here they come!" said the crowd, as some eight or ten horses make the turn for home.

"Guardsmen baked!" shouts the ring, as the horse is seen nearly last.

"The Irish horse wins for a thousand," shouts an over-excited speculator.

"Done," says the sly-looking little man, and again the metallics are at work.

Lord Plunger looks on with a calm indifferent demeanour.

"By G—, Plunger," said one of George's old messmates, with a scared countenance, "Bradon is done. We shall all drop finely."

"Wait!" was the quiet answer.

The last hurdle but one is taken, which the Irish horse jumps first; but what a change has taken place in the field! Scarlet and white hoops, instead of being nearly last, is hanging on the leading horse's quarters, and it is very patent to all those skilled in racing matters that from the manner Guardsman skimmed over the hurdle the

other horse was only permitted to lead on sufferance.

Turn where you will, the same look of intense excitement is discernible on every countenance; the vast mass surges to and fro, the hoarse murmur of the frenzied multitude has something unearthly in it.

"The Irish horse wins,—Guardsmen wins!" is shouted on all sides. The horses come up closely locked together; never moving on his horse Bradon sits as quiet as a statue, but the heels of the other horseman are at work; the whip arm is raised, but just as it is the strain on Guardsman's jaws is relaxed, and the noble horse, without the slightest effort, quits the other, and is landed an easy winner by some half-dozen lengths.

"There," said Lord Plunger, heaving a vast sigh, which seemed to relieve him immensely; "did you ever see such a horse, and such a bit of riding?"

His lordship is not calm now; there is a wild feverish light in his eyes; he trembles, too, slightly; a bright hectic spot is on either cheek, and the veins in his temples are swollen, and seem ready to burst as he takes off his hat to draw his hand across his clammy brow.

"Thank God!" he muttered, as he turned to meet his friend, who was returning to the weighing-

stand, amidst such shouts as are seldom heard. Cheer after cheer rent the air.

“God bless you, old fellow!” said his lordship, as his friend passed him in the enclosure; “there never was, and never will be, such a Silverpool again. I will never bet another farthing! I’m square again.”

George is now dismounted. Taking the saddle off his noble favourite, as he has it on one arm, he fondly and proudly pats his neck. Tim is standing at the horse’s head, with a rein in each hand; tears are coursing down the old man’s cheek. “God spare you many years, sir!” said he to his master, who looked kindly at him; “but never ride another race whilst I am alive; I can’t bear it; one more day such as this would be my last.”

George entered the weighing-room. “Guardsman, ten twelve,” said he, seating himself in the chair.

The clerk of the scales approached with book in hand and pencil in mouth, looking up to the dial for an instant said, “Right!”

Cheer after cheer rent the air again as he came out in his top-coat.

“For God’s sake, George, come to the drag and have some champagne; I’m ready to faint,” said Lord Plunger, as he seized his arm.

“Come on, then,” returned Bradon ; “I’m thirsty too ; but just let me look to the horse and Tim first.”

But Tim had clothed the horses up, as he said the boxes were only a few paces off, and they would be better dressed there. As he turned to follow Lord Plunger, he was seized by a host of his old companions-in-arms, hoisted up, and carried to the drag on their shoulders.

“Bradon,” said Lord Plunger, after he had drained off a silver goblet of the sparkling wine, “we have pulled out of this well, right well ; for myself, I have now done with betting and the Turf. I have been hit, and hard hit, but this *coup* more than squares me. I’ll tempt the fickle goddess no more.”

“My decision you knew long ago,” returned his friend. “This is my last appearance in public. I shall only hunt, and I think with such a horse as Guardsman I may be a first-flight man.”

His lordship and Bradon were ever afterwards only lookers-on at the few race-meetings they attended, and here we must take leave of them.

In a snug little cottage close by Bradon Hall lives Tim Mason, now rather an infirm old man ; still he looks after the stud as usual.

In his pretty little parlour, on a side table,

stand two glass cases. Under one is a saddle, bridle, &c., in the other a satin racing jacket and cap—scarlet and white hoops. It may easily be divined whose they were.

“They were only used once,” he would say, pointing them out to some friend who had dropped in to see him, “only once; but they won a pot of money for my boy. Lord, you should have seen him ride and win that Silverpool—it was a sight for sore eyes, I can tell you. Never were two better horses than Guardsman and my gray. It’s rather the ticket to see them in the field now; they’re the best hunters as ever was foaled.

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A CUB-HUNTING INVITATION

Monday. -- Received letter from POWNCEBY. "Come down to my little place and we'll do a morning's cubbing. Can mount you. Say Tuesday night by 6.5, and I'll meet you at Chickenham Station." Deuced good of POWNCEBY. Hardly known him a week. Will wire at once to accept.

Tuesday.—Go down by 6.5 train. Pouring all the way. Wonder how far Chickenham is. Inquire, and am told next station. POWNCEBY receives me on platform. Awfully dark and still raining. Hope he has brought closed carriage of some sort. Hate open carts this weather. POWNCEBY greets me heartily. Seems a deuced good chap this. So thoroughly pleased to see me. "My little place only a short step from here, so hope you won't mind walking? Porter will take your bag. Yes, the roads *are* a bit muddy, but that's nothing. Ready? We'll start, then." Don't think walking is quite in my line, especially on pouring wet night. We trudge along dark lane, splashing into deep puddles at every other step.

“ Don’t mind going a little out of our way, do you ? ” says POWNCEBY, “ must just run into the butcher’s and the grocer’s to take a few things home with me.” We diverge into dimly-lit street. POWNCEBY disappears into shop, leaving me standing outside. Seems to be at least an hour in grocer’s; another ten minutes in butcher’s. My teeth chattering now. Start again, and walk on and on. Ask, “ Where’s your place, are we anywhere near it ? ” “ Oh, close by,” says POWNCEBY, cheerily. Trudge on again; wet through by this time. Am seriously marshalling supply of cuss-words into their places for use in the near future, when POWNCEBY suddenly grips my arm, dropping pound of sausages from under his own at same moment. They fall into puddle. “ There’s my little place, old chap.” Wish he wouldn’t “ old chap ” me. Hardly know the fellow, and begin to hate him now. He picks up sausages, and repeats, “ there’s my little place; jolly little crib, ain’t it ? ” Fear POWNCEBY is vulgar, never noticed it before. Can just see feeble light in cottage window, apparently miles off. Murmur, faintly, “ Oh, I see,” and struggle along again. My boots like wet paper, now, and trying to imitate suction pump. Do rest of journey silently. Cottage at last. POWNCEBY lifts latch, and we enter. Smell of lamp-oil overpowering.

POWNCEBY'S "little place" is labourer's four-roomed cottage, and singularly dirty at that. Met by aggressive elderly female, even dirtier than cottage. POWNCEBY silently hands her mud-stained sausages and two chops, wrapped in newspaper. I don't exactly dine, says POWNCEBY to me, "I have supper, you know; same thing, only different name. Being a bachelor, I make no fuss with anyone." Rather wish he would. "Come upstairs and put yourself straight. Mind that loose board. Not 'up to weight,' as we say, eh?" Avoid loose plank and stumble upstairs into sloping-roofed attic. Painted wooden bedstead; ditto washstand. Smells musty. Paper peeling off walls, and ceiling coming down in patches. I shudder, and ask when I may expect portmanteau. "Oh, in about an hour, I daresay. Got all you want? Sure that you're *quite* comfortable?" *Mem.* This man evidently an unconscious humorist. Have to borrow (greatly against my will) some dry clothes of POWNCEBY'S in absence of my own. Wash, and descend rickety stairs to sitting room. Fire smokes. "Like me," says POWNCEBY, facetiously, and laughs uproariously. Must have *very* keen sense of humour, this man. Aggressive female enters with two chops (fried) and ditto sausages; small jug of table beer and tinned loaf complete picture. "Let's fall to," says

POWNCEBY ; “ you see your meal before you. None of your French dishes for me ! ” (*Mem.* nor for me either, unfortunately,) “ but, good, plain, English food, eh ? ” Do not reply, but attack sausage. Decline fried chop. Beer turgid ; leave it untasted ; Thank goodness, my portmanteau arrives during repast. Pay porter half-a-crown—looks as if he had earned it. POWNCEBY finishes off my chop and his own too, smacks his lips, and produces bottle of “ cooking ” brandy. I light cigar, and take one sip of the brandy. Find one sip more than satisfying and do not try another. “ Got a nice horse for you, to-morrow,” says POWNCEBY ; “ he ain’t a beauty, but a real good ’un. Useful horse, too. Does all the chain-harrowing and carting work. Must start at 5 A.M. sharp and get breakfast afterwards.” I nod. Am past the speaking stage now. Retire to bed, damp and shivering, and very hungry. Find mouse seated on dressing table, regarding me contemptuously. Shy boot at him. Miss mouse, but smash mirror. Feel glow of unholy satisfaction at this. Toss about all night.

Wednesday.—Rise 4.30, dress by candle-light, and crawl down stairs. Ask POWNCEBY where are horses ? “ Oh, we’ll walk round to the stable for ’em,” says POWNCEBY. Plod through many puddles, and enter evil smelling shed. Labourer saddling

melancholy grey, elaborately stained on both quarters. "There you are, and as good as they make 'em." Don't know who "they" are, but wish "they" would "make 'em" a little cleaner. Mount, and am joined by POWNCEBY on equine framework. Beginning to rain again. "This is jolly, eh?" he says. "Oh, awfully," I reply, feebly, as my wreck nearly blunders down on to his fiddle head. Arrive at meet 6.30. "Oh, the 'ounds 'as bin gorn this 'arf hour or more. The meet was at six," says a yokel.

POWNCEBY borrows fiver on road home. Caught 10.15 back to town, and if ever——!

TOLD AFTER MESS

“ You want to hear the story, eh ? ”

Loud chorus of subalterns : “ No ! ”

“ All right, then, that settles your fate, and you shall ! ” and I lit a cigar preliminary to starting the yarn.

“ Well do I remember the episode. It was a cut-throat country that we had to ride over. Many of my soldier comrades, brave and true, fell that day thickly around me—but as they all got up again, it did not really so much matter.”

Having deftly dodged a sofa-cushion shied at my head by way of a gentle hint to “ get forrard,” I dropped from airy heights to the sober realms of fact, and proceeded to tell my plain unvarnished tale.

“ After hunting for ten years with a pack belonging to a Cavalry regiment—let us call it the ‘ Heavyshot Drag ’—the Fates (and Taylor & Co.) removed me into a far country, and but for the kindness of some members of the hunt, who often asked me up and gave me a mount, I should have known the Heavyshot no more, as it

was too far to bring any of my own select stud—consisting of a musical one, with three legs and a swinger, a bolter with a blind eye, and a 13.2 pony!—up for the gallop. And what jolly gallops they always were, too!

“One day I got a wire from my excellent friend Major Laughton, who was then Master of the Heavy-shot, ‘Come up, Friday. Lunch mess. Hounds meet Pickles Common.’ To which, in the degenerate language of the times, I wired reply, ‘You bet,’ and one P.M. on the day named found my breeched and booted legs beneath the mahogany of the hospitable mess room.

“Major Laughton, in greeting me, said, ‘So sorry, my dear boy, I can’t give you my second horse, as he’s all wrong to-day—a severe “pain under the pinafore” has floored him. But I’ve got you a gee from—well, never mind where from, I know he can jump.’ And with these words the conversation dropped. As to where my mount came from—well, it was no concern of mine, was it? I thought I noticed a slight deflection of the gallant Major’s left eyelid when he was speaking, but that, after all, might have been my fancy.

“After putting in some strong work over the luncheon course, we lit cigars, and in a few minutes both horses and hounds appeared on the parade

ground. My horse with the mysterious origin was a good-looking bay, who carried his head in the 'cocky' fashion beloved of riding-masters, and proved a very pleasant hack. We jogged along and soon reached the meet.

"The usual scene of eagerness and excitement, hounds supplying the latter element, whilst the superior animal, man, jostled his fellows consumedly, in his natural desire to 'get off the mark' as soon as decency and the Master permitted. The last-named held forth vigorously to us, as with a 'Tow-yow-yow !' hounds dashed across the first field, and jumped, scrambled, or squeezed through the first fence.

"'Let 'em get over before you start, bless you all ! Come back there, you man on the grey ! What the saintly St Ursula are you doing ? All right, now you can go, and be past-participled to you all !'

"And away we went as if His Satanic Majesty had assisted us with the toe of his boot ! Swish ! and the first fence, long looked at and much disliked, is a thing of the past ; horses pull and bore to get their heads as we sail down a stiffish hill and over a broad ditch at the bottom. My horse drops one hind leg in, and loses a couple of lengths by the performance. Up a slight slope we stand in our

stirrups—to ease our horses, *bien entendu*—not to look at the forbidding obstacle in front of us, oh dear no! a post and rails, with no top bar broken anywhere, and what I hear a groom behind me calling a ‘narsetty’ great ditch on the landing side. Our gallant first Whip crams his horse at it, and but for the animal’s forgetfulness in leaving both hind legs the wrong side, would have led over in great style; but ’tis an ill wind which blows nobody any good, and those legs break the top rail for us. Did I follow the Whip over a bit close? Well, I hope not; verdict, ‘not guilty, but don’t do it again.’ Two flights of hurdles and a ploughed field bring us to the main road. We jump into, and out of, this, leaving two of our number as ‘book-makers’—*i.e.*, ‘laying on the field.’ On we go again over about three miles of pretty hunting country, with nice, plain-sailing fences; then comes a stile, at which one refusal and two ‘downers’ still further reduces the field; and, with another flight of hurdles surmounted, we come to a check. Oh, the shaking of tails and blowing of nostrils! the ‘soaping’ of reins and the sweat on the foam-flecked bodies of the poor gees!

“‘Horses seem to have had about enough of it, don’t you think so?’ said a man who had pulled up just alongside of me.

“ I turned in my saddle to answer, when, without the slightest warning, and giving vent to a groan which I seem to hear still, my horse suddenly fell to the ground. A dozen men slipped off their horses to lend a hand. We quickly unbuckled the girths and pulled the saddle off, but, even as we did so, I saw the glazing eye, which told unmistakably that the poor old chap had done his last gallop and jumped his last fence. He was as dead as Julius Cæsar !

“ ‘ By Jove, and it’s one of the Queen’s, too ! ’ exclaimed an impetuous Subaltern.

“ ‘ Shut up, you young ass ! ’ quickly rejoined his Major in low tones, and the good youth incontinently closed the floodgates of his eloquence just as an enormous man, Colonel de Boots, in command of the Cavalry dépôt, who had driven out to see the fun, pushed his way through the little crowd assembled round the ‘ stiff un ’ in order to tender his advice.

“ It was a tight place for those concerned, but the tension was quickly relaxed when, instead of looking at the horse, he turned to me and said, ‘ Deuced sorry *for your loss*, really—most annoying. My wife will be delighted to give you a seat in her carriage. My servant shall look after your horse until——’

“ ‘Not for worlds, sir,’ I replied hastily, ‘that is all arranged for. But if you will really be so good as to take me to Mrs de Boots’ carriage, and if she would not mind my entering it in this very muddy condition——?’ ”

“ ‘Delighted ; come along with me !’ We walked off, and the situation was saved.

“ ‘Only temporarily, though. I blandly received Colonel and Mrs de Boots’ condolences on the loss of *my* horse all the way home to Barracks, and I heard afterwards that they thought I ‘took it in very good part.’ The moment I was released from their carriage, after thanking them warmly for picking me up as they had done, I took to my heels and ran down to Major Laughton’s quarters.

“ ‘Here’s a pretty mess, my boy !’ he exclaimed ; ‘there’ll have to be a Board to “sit on” the departed, to-morrow, and report in what way he came to his “frightful end,” as the newspaper Johnnies call it. Which *is* his “frightful end,” by the way ?’ he added in meditative tones.

“ ‘Give it up ; ask me another,’ I rejoined, with a grin. ‘But, seriously, will there be an awful row when it comes out that we were hunting one of Her Majesty’s ?’ ”

“ ‘Well, naturally, a Paternal Government doesn’t provide hunters for “all and sundry.” Come along

with me: we'll see the Vet., and find out what can be done.'

"Away we went to the Vet.'s office, and fortunately found him in. Laughton related the whole affair to him, and wound up by saying, 'I don't want you to do anything that isn't strictly right, you know; but if you can see a way of helping us out of the difficulty, I shall be awfully obliged. The worst of it is that it's a young horse—Bradford.'

"'Bradford? Oh, no; I saw Bradford in his stall not ten minutes ago.'

"'Are you sure of that?'

"'Oh, perfectly.'

"'How strange! I sent a man down to the stables this morning to tell them to send Bradford up—but I'll ask him at once: he's just in the yard there,' and the next minute we were eagerly questioning the 'Tommy' as he stood rigidly at attention.

"'Did you tell them I wanted Bradford?'

"'Yessir.'

"'What did they say?'

"'Said there was no such 'orse as Radford.'

"'Bradford, I said.'

"'Beg pardon, sir. Understood the name was Radford, and the Sergeant——'

"'Yes, the Sergeant, what did he say then?'

"'Said I was a hass, sir——'

"'Quite right, go on,' said the Major, encouragingly.

“ ‘And that I must mean Radnor, and Radnor was the ’orse as was sent up, sir.’

“The Major turned on his heel without a word, and walked again into the Vet.’s office, followed by me. The ‘Tommy’ remained at ‘attention,’ and may be in the same attitude now, as far as I know.

“ ‘This is a relief, anyhow,’ said Laughton, ‘Radnor would have been “cast” very soon, and so his sudden death won’t be so surprising to the Board.’

“Up to this point the Vet. had been silent; now a smile hovered over his face as he said, ‘Leave the whole business to me, Major. Where’s the defunct?’

“The Major described the place, and the interview ended, and we walked back to Laughton’s quarters.

* * * * *

“The Board assembled, and briefly, the result of their deliberations was to find that the bay gelding Radnor was discovered dead in his stall, the certified cause of death being fatty degeneration of the heart.”

* * * * *

“Yes, that’s all very fine and large, but how the——? what the——? when the——!!!” broke in a Babel of voices.

“Hold on, boys, and you shall know one or two things which the Board didn’t know. Picture a scene in the barrack yard like this: a dark night, moon only showing in fitful gleams now and then; a trolly with a couple of horses; four stalwart

Tommies and a sergeant-major seated on the trolly; it rattles out of the barrack square and over some five miles or so of road to the heath where the hero of the day breathed his last. The trolly is drawn up on to the grass, and after a few minutes' search the Sergeant-Major discovers the *corpus delicti*; with much exertion it is hauled up on to the trolly, and the return journey commences.

“Just before the witching hour of midnight ‘when sentries yawn and Colonels go to bed’—Shakespeare freely transposed, boys, this—enter the trolly to the stable yard again. The dead horse is hoisted out, put in it's stall, and the head-collar most carefully adjusted (‘in case he should get loose,’ observed one Tommy to another, with an unholy grin).

“All the actors in the little drama retire to imbibe liquid sustenance ‘stood’ by an invisible donor—peace reigns again all around the barrack square, and——and that's the end. Waiter, bring me a whiskey and soda, and some matches.”

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